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MELMOTH

THE

WANDERER:

A

TALE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF " BERTRAM," &c.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

EDINBURGH:
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LONDON.

1820.

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TO THE

MOST NOBLE

THE

MARCHIONESS OF ABERCORN,

This Romance

Is, by her Ladyship's permission,

Respectfully inscribed by

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THE hint of this Romance (or Tale) was taken from a passage in one of my Sermons, which (as it is to be presumed very few have read) I shall here take the liberty to quote. The passage is this.

" At this moment is there one of us
" present, however we may have departed
" from the Lord, disobeyed his will, and
" disregarded his word—is there one of
" us who would, at this moment, accept

" all that man could bestow, or earth af-
" ford, to resign the hope of his salvation?
" —No, there is not one—not such a fool
" on earth, were the enemy of mankind
" to traverse it with the offer!"

This passage suggested the idea of " Melmoth the Wanderer." The Reader will find that idea developed in the following pages, with what power or success *he* is to decide.

The " Spaniard's Tale" has been censured by a friend to whom I read it, as containing too much attempt at the revivification of the horrors of Radcliffe-Romance, of the persecutions of convents, and the terrors of the Inquisition.

I defended myself, by trying to point out to my friend, that I had made the misery of conventual life depend less on the startling adventures one meets with in

romances, than on that irritating series of petty torments which constitutes the misery of life in general, and which, amid the tideless stagnation of monastic existence, solitude gives its inmates leisure to invent, and power combined with malignity, the full disposition to practise. I trust this defence will operate more on the conviction of the Reader, than it did on that of my friend.

For the rest of the Romance, there are some parts of it which I have borrowed from real life.

The story of John Sandal and Elinor Mortimer is founded in fact.

The original from which the Wife of Walberg is imperfectly sketched is a living woman, and *long may she live.*

I cannot again appear before the public in so unseemly a character as that of a writer of romances, without regretting the

necessity that compels me to it. Did my profession furnish me with the means of subsistence, I should hold myself culpable indeed in having recourse to any other, but—am I allowed the choice?

DUBLIN,
31*st August* 1820.

MELMOTH.

CHAPTER I.

Alive again? Then show me where he is;
I'll give a thousand pounds to look upon him.
SHAKESPEARE.

In the autumn of 1816, John Melmoth, a student in Trinity College, Dublin, quitted it to attend a dying uncle on whom his hopes for independence chiefly rested. John was the orphan son of a younger brother, whose small property scarce could pay John's college expences; but the uncle was rich, unmarried, and old; and John, from his infancy, had been brought up

to look on him with that mingled sensation of awe, and of the wish, without the means to conciliate, (that sensation at once attractive and repulsive), with which we regard a being who (as nurse, domestic, and parent have tutored us to believe) holds the very threads of our existence in his hands, and may prolong or snap them when he pleases.

On receiving this summons, John set immediately out to attend his uncle.

The beauty of the country through which he travelled (it was the county Wicklow) could not prevent his mind from dwelling on many painful thoughts, some borrowed from the past, and more from the future. His uncle's caprice and moroseness,—the strange reports concerning the cause of the secluded life he had led for many years,—his own dependent state,—fell like blows fast and heavy on his mind. He roused himself to repel them,—sat up in the mail, in which he was a solitary passenger,—looked out on the pro-

spect,—consulted his watch;—then he thought they receded for a moment,—but there was nothing to fill their place, and he was forced to invite them back for company. When the mind is thus active in calling over invaders, no wonder the conquest is soon completed. As the carriage drew near the Lodge, (the name of old Melmoth's seat), John's heart grew heavier every moment.

The recollection of this awful uncle from infancy,—when he was never permitted to approach him without innumerable lectures,—*not to be troublesome*,—not to go too near his uncle,—not to ask him any questions,—on no account to disturb the inviolable arrangement of his snuff-box, hand-bell, and spectacles, nor to suffer the glittering of the gold-headed cane to tempt him to the mortal sin of handling it,—and, finally, to pilot himself aright through his perilous course in and out of the apartment without striking against the piles of books, globes, old newspapers, wig-

blocks, tobacco-pipes, and snuff-cannisters, not to mention certain hidden rocks of rat-traps and mouldy books beneath the chairs, —together with the final reverential bow at the door, which was to be closed with cautious gentleness, and the stairs to be descended as if he were "shod with felt." —This recollection was carried on to his school-boy years, when at Christmas and Easter, the ragged poney, the jest of the school, was dispatched to bring the reluctant visitor to the Lodge,—where his pastime was to sit vis-a-vis to his uncle, without speaking or moving, till the pair resembled Don Raymond and the ghost of Beatrice in the Monk,—then watching him as he picked the bones of lean mutton out of his mess of weak broth, the latter of which he handed to his nephew with a needless caution not to "take more than "he liked,"—then hurried to bed by daylight, even in winter, to save the expence of an inch of candle, where he lay awake and restless from hunger, till his uncle's

retiring at eight o'clock gave signal to the governante of the meagre household to steal up to him with some fragments of her own scanty meal, administering between every mouthful a whispered caution not to tell his uncle. Then his college life, passed in an attic in the second square, uncheered by an invitation to the country; the gloomy summer wasted in walking up and down the deserted streets, as his uncle would not defray the expences of his journey;—the only intimation of his existence, received in quarterly epistles, containing, with the scanty but punctual remittance, complaints of the expences of his education, cautions against extravagance, and lamentations for the failure of tenants and the fall of the value of lands. All these recollections came over him, and along with them the remembrance of that last scene, where his dependence on his uncle was impressed on him by the dying lips of his father.

"John, I must leave you, my poor boy;

it has pleased God to take your father from you before he could do for you what would have made this hour less painful to him. You must look up, John, to your uncle for every thing. He has oddities and infirmities, but you must learn to bear with them, and with many other things too, as you will learn too soon. And now, my poor boy, may He who is the father of the fatherless look on your desolate state, and give you favour in the eyes of your uncle." As this scene rose to John's memory, his eyes filled fast with tears, which he hastened to wipe away as the carriage stopt to let him out at his uncle's gate.

He alighted, and with a change of linen in a handkerchief, (his only travelling equipment), he approached his uncle's gate. The lodge was in ruins, and a barefooted boy from an adjacent cabin ran to lift on its single hinge what had once been a gate, but was now a few planks so villainously put together, that they clattered like a sign

in a high wind. The stubborn post of the gate, yielding at last to the united strength of John and his barefooted assistant, grated heavily through the mud and gravel stones, in which it left a deep and sloughy furrow, and the entrance lay open. John, after searching his pocket in vain for a trifle to reward his assistant, pursued his way, while the lad, on his return, cleared the road at a hop step and jump, plunging through the mud with all the dabbling and amphibious delight of a duck, and scarce less proud of his agility than of his "sarv-" ing a gentleman." As John slowly trod the miry road which had once been the approach, he could discover, by the dim light of an autumnal evening, signs of increasing desolation since he had last visited the spot,—signs that penury had been aggravated and sharpened into downright misery. There was not a fence or a hedge round the domain: an uncemented wall of loose stones, whose numerous gaps were filled with furze or thorns, supplied their

place. There was not a tree or shrub on the lawn; the lawn itself was turned into pasture-ground, and a few sheep were picking their scanty food amid the pebble-stones, thistles, and hard mould, through which a few blades of grass made their rare and squalid appearance.

The house itself stood strongly defined even amid the darkness of the evening sky; for there were neither wings, or offices, or shrubbery, or tree, to shade or support it, and soften its strong harsh outline. John, after a melancholy gaze at the grass-grown steps and boarded windows, "addressed "himself" to knock at the door; but knocker there was none: loose stones, however, there were in plenty; and John was making vigorous application to the door with one of them, till the furious barking of a mastiff, who threatened at every bound to break his chain, and whose yell and growl, accompanied by "eyes "that glow and fangs that grin," savoured as much of hunger as of rage, made the

assailant raise the siege on the door, and betake himself to a well-known passage that led to the kitchen. A light glimmered in the window as he approached: he raised the latch with a doubtful hand; but, when he saw the party within, he advanced with the step of a man no longer doubtful of his welcome.

Round a turf-fire, whose well-replenished fuel gave testimony to the "master's" indisposition, who would probably as soon have been placed on the fire himself as seen the whole *kish* emptied on it once, were seated the old housekeeper, two or three *followers*, (*i. e.* people who ate, drank, and lounged about in any kitchen that was open in the neighbourhood, on an occasion of grief or joy, all for his honor's sake, and for the great rispict they bore the family), and an old woman, whom John immediately recognized as the doctress of the neighbourhood,—a withered Sybil, who prolonged her squalid existence by practising on the fears, the ignorance, and the sufferings

of beings as miserable as herself. Among the better sort, to whom she sometimes had access by the influence of servants, she tried the effects of some simples, her skill in which was sometimes productive of success. Among the lower orders she talked much of the effects of the "evil eye," against which she boasted a counter-spell, of unfailing efficacy; and while she spoke, she shook her grizzled locks with such witch-like eagerness, that she never failed to communicate to her half-terrified, half-believing audience, some portion of that enthusiasm which, amid all her consciousness of imposture, she herself probably felt a large share of; still, when the case at last became desperate, when credulity itself lost all patience, and hope and life were departing together, she urged the miserable patient to confess "*there was something about his heart;*" and when this confession was extorted from the weariness of pain and the ignorance of poverty, she nodded and

muttered so mysteriously, as to convey to the bystanders, that she had had difficulties to contend with which were invincible by human power. When there was no pretext, from indisposition, for her visiting either "his honor's" kitchen, or the cottar's hut,—when the stubborn and persevering convalescence of the whole country threatened her with starvation,—she still had a resource:—if there were no lives to be shortened, there were fortunes to be told;—she worked "by spells, and by such daubry as is beyond our element." No one twined so well as she the mystic yarn to be dropt into the lime-kiln pit, on the edge of which stood the shivering inquirer into futurity, doubtful whether the answer to her question of "who holds?" was to be uttered by the voice of demon or lover.

No one knew so well as she to find where the four streams met, in which, on the same portentous season, the chemise was to be immersed, and then displayed before the fire, (in the name of one whom we dare not mention to "ears polite"), to be

turned by the figure of the destined husband before morning. No one but herself (she said) knew the hand in which the comb was to be held, while the other was employed in conveying the apple to the mouth,—while, during the joint operation, the shadow of the phantom-spouse was to pass across the mirror before which it was performed. No one was more skilful or active in removing every iron implement from the kitchen where these ceremonies were usually performed by the credulous and terrified dupes of her wizardry, lest, instead of the form of a comely youth exhibiting a ring on his white finger, an headless figure should stalk to the rack, (*Anglicè*, dresser), take down a long spit, or, in default of that, snatch a poker from the fire-side, and mercilessly take measure with its iron length of the sleeper for a coffin. No one, in short, knew better how to torment or terrify her victims into a belief of that power which may and has reduced the strongest minds to the level of the weakest; and under the influence of

which the cultivated sceptic, Lord Lyttleton, yelled and gnashed and writhed in his last hours, like the poor girl who, in the belief of the horrible visitation of the vampire, shrieked aloud, that her grandfather was sucking her vital blood while she slept, and expired under the influence of imaginary horror. Such was the being to whom old Melmoth had committed his life, half from credulity, and (*Hibernicè* speaking) *more than half* from avarice. Among this groupe John advanced,—recognising some, —disliking more,—distrusting all. The old housekeeper received him with cordiality;—he was always her "whiteheaded boy," she said,—(*imprimis,* his hair was as black as jet), and she tried to lift her withered hand to his head with an action between a benediction and a caress, till the difficulty of the attempt forced on her the conviction that that head was fourteen inches higher than her reach since she had last patted it. The men, with the national deference of the Irish to a person

of superior rank, all rose at his approach, (their stools chattering on the broken flags), and wished his honor "a thousand years, and long life to the back of that; and would not his honor take something to keep the grief out of his heart;" and so saying, five or six red and bony hands tendered him glasses of whiskey all at once. All this time the Sybil sat silent in the ample chimney-corner, sending redoubled whiffs out of her pipe. John gently declined the offer of spirits, received the attentions of the old housekeeper cordially, looked askance at the withered crone who occupied the chimney corner, and then glanced at the table, which displayed other cheer than he had been accustomed to see in his "honor's time." There was a wooden dish of potatoes, which old Melmoth would have considered enough for a week's subsistence. There was the salted salmon, (a luxury unknown even in London. *Vide* Miss Edgeworth's Tales, "The Absentee)."

There was the *slink-veal,* flanked with

tripe; and, finally, there were lobsters and *fried* turbot enough to justify what the author of the tale asserts, " suo periculo," that when his great grandfather, the Dean of Killala, hired servants at the deanery, they stipulated that they should not be required to eat turbot or lobster more than twice a-week. There were also bottles of Wicklow ale, long and surreptitiously borrowed from his " honor's" cellar, and which now made their first appearance on the kitchen hearth, and manifested their impatience of further constraint, by hissing, spitting, and bouncing in the face of the fire that provoked its animosity. But the whiskey (genuine illegitimate potsheen, smelling strongly of weed and smoke, and breathing defiance to excisemen) appeared, the " veritable Amphitryon" of the feast; every one praised, and drank as deeply as he praised.

John, as he looked round the circle, and thought of his dying uncle, was forcibly reminded of the scene at Don Quixote's de-

parture, where, in spite of the grief caused by the dissolution of the worthy knight, we are informed that "nevertheless the niece eat her victuals, the housekeeper drank to the repose of his soul, and even Sancho cherished his little carcase." After returning, "as he might," the courtesies of the party, John asked how his uncle was. "As bad as he can be;"—"Much better, and many thanks to your honor," was uttered in such rapid and discordant unison by the party, that John turned from one to the other, not knowing which or what to believe. "They say his honor has had a fright," said a fellow, upwards of six feet high, approaching by way of whispering, and then bellowing the sound six inches above John's head. "But then his honor has had *a cool* since," said a man who was quietly swallowing the spirits that John had refused. At these words the Sybil who sat in the chimney corner slowly drew her pipe from her mouth, and turned towards the party: The oracular move-

ments of a Pythoness on her tripod never excited more awe, or impressed for the moment a deeper silence. "It's not *here*," said she, pressing her withered finger on her wrinkled forehead, "nor *here*,—nor *here*;" and she extended her hand to the foreheads of those who were near her, who all bowed as if they were receiving a benediction, but had immediate recourse to the spirits afterwards, as if to ensure its effects. —"It's all *here*—it's all *about the heart*;" and as she spoke she spread and pressed her fingers on her hollow bosom with a force of action that thrilled her hearers.—"It's all *here*," she added, repeating the action, (probably excited by the effect she had produced), and then sunk on her seat, resumed her pipe, and spoke no more. At this moment of involuntary awe on the part of John, and of terrified silence on that of the rest, an unusual sound was heard in the house, and the whole company started as if a musket had been discharged among them:—it was the unwonted sound of old

Melmoth's bell. His domestics were so few, and so constantly near him, that the sound of his bell startled them as much as if he had been ringing the knell for his own interment. "He used always to *rap down* for me," said the old housekeeper, hurrying out of the kitchen; "he said pulling the bells wore out the ropes."

The sound of the bell produced its full effect. The housekeeper rushed into the room, followed by a number of women, (the Irish præficæ), all ready to prescribe for the dying or weep for the dead,—all clapping their hard hands, or wiping their dry eyes. These hags all surrounded the bed; and to witness their loud, wild, and desperate grief, their cries of "Oh! he's going, his honor's going, his honor's going," one would have imagined their lives were bound up in his, like those of the wives in the story of Sinbad the Sailor, who were to be interred alive with their deceased husbands.

Four of them wrung their hands and

howled round the bed, while one, with all the adroitness of a Mrs Quickly, felt his honor's feet, and "upward and upward," and "all was cold as any stone."

Old Melmoth withdrew his feet from the grasp of the hag,—counted with his keen eye (keen amid the approaching dimness of death) the number assembled round his bed,—raised himself on his sharp elbow, and pushing away the housekeeper, (who attempted to settle his nightcap, that had been shoved on one side in the struggle, and gave his haggard, dying face, a kind of grotesque fierceness), bellowed out in tones that made the company start,—"What the devil brought ye all here?" The question scattered the whole party for a moment; but rallying instantly, they communed among themselves in whispers, and frequently using the sign of the cross, muttered "The devil,—Christ save us, the devil in his mouth the first word he spoke." "Aye," roared the invalid, "and the devil in my eye the first sight I see." "Where,

—where?" cried the terrified housekeeper, clinging close to the invalid in her terror, and half-hiding herself in the blanket, which she snatched without mercy from his struggling and exposed limbs. "There, there," he repeated, (during the battle of the blanket), pointing to the huddled and terrified women, who stood aghast at hearing themselves arointed as the very demons they came to banish. "Oh! Lord keep your honor's head," said the housekeeper in a more soothing tone, when her fright was over; "and sure your honor knows them all, is'n't *her* name,—and *her* name,—and *her* name,"—and she pointed respectively to each of them, adding their names, which we shall spare the English reader the torture of reciting, (as a proof of our lenity, adding the last only, Cotchleen O'Mulligan). "Ye lie, ye b——h," growled old Melmoth; "their name is Legion, for they are many,—turn them all out of the room,—turn them all out of doors,—if they howl at my death, they

shall howl in earnest,—not for my death, for they would see me dead and damned too with dry eyes, but for want of the whiskey that they would have stolen if they could have got at it," (and here old Melmoth grasped a key which lay under his pillow, and shook it in vain triumph at the old housekeeper, who had long possessed the means of getting at the spirits unknown to his "honor"), "and for want of the victuals you have pampered them with." "*Pampered*, oh Ch—st!" ejaculated the housekeeper. "Aye, and what are there so many candles for, all *fours*, and the same below I warrant. Ah! you —you—worthless, wasteful old devil." "Indeed, your honor, they are all *sixes*." "Sixes,—and what the devil are you burning sixes for, d'ye think it's *the wake* already? Ha?" "Oh! not yet, your honor, not yet," chorussed the beldams; "but in God's good time, your honor knows," in a tone that spoke ill suppressed impatience for the event. "Oh! that your ho-

nor would think of making your soul." "That's the first sensible word you have said," said the dying man, "fetch me the prayer-book,—you'll find it there under that old boot-jack,—blow off the cobwebs; —it has not been opened this many a year." It was handed to him by the old governante, on whom he turned a reproaching eye. "What made you burn sixes in the kitchen, you extravagant jade? How many years have you lived in this house?" "I don't know, your honor." "Did you "ever see any extravagance or waste in it? "Oh never, never, your honor." "Was any thing but a farthing candle ever burned in the kitchen?" "Never, never, your honor." "Were not you kept as tight as hand and head and heart could keep you, were you not? answer me that." "Oh yes, sure, your honor; every *sowl* about us knows that,—every one does your honor justice, that you kept the closest house and closest hand in the country,—your honor was always a good warrant for it." "And

how dare you unlock my hold before death has unlocked it," said the dying miser, shaking his meagre hand at her. "I smelt meat in the house,—I heard voices in the house,—I heard the key turn in the door over and over. Oh that I was up," he added, rolling in impatient agony in his bed, "Oh that I was up, to see the waste and ruin that is going on. But it would kill me," he continued, sinking back on the bolster, for he never allowed himself a pillow; "it would kill me,—the very thought of it is killing me now." The women, discomfited and defeated, after sundry winks and whispers, were huddling out of the room, till recalled by the sharp eager tones of old Melmoth.—"Where are ye trooping to now? back to the kitchen to gormandize and guzzle? Won't one of ye stay and listen while there's a prayer read for me? Ye may want it one day for yourselves, ye hags." Awed by this expostulation and menace, the train silently returned, and placed themselves round the

bed, while the housekeeper, though a Catholic, asked if his honor would not have a clergyman to give him *the rights*, (rites) of his church. The eyes of the dying man sparkled with vexation at the proposal. "What for,—just to have him expect a scarf and hat-band at the funeral. Read the prayers yourself, you old ———; that will save something." The housekeeper made the attempt, but soon declined it, alleging, as her reason, that her eyes had been watery ever since his honor took ill. "That's because you had always a drop in them," said the invalid, with a spiteful sneer, which the contraction of approaching death stiffened into a hideous grin.—"Here,—is not there one of you that's gnashing and howling there, that can get up a prayer to keep me from it?" So adjured, one of the women offered her services; and of her it might truly be said, as of the "most desartless man of the watch" in Dogberry's time, that "her reading and writing came by nature;" for

she never had been at school, and had never before seen or opened a Protestant prayer book in her life; nevertheless, on she went, and with more emphasis than good discretion, read nearly through the service for the "churching of women;" which in our prayer-books following that of the burial of the dead, she perhaps imagined was someway connected with the state of the invalid.

She read with great solemnity,—it was a pity that two interruptions occurred during the performance, one from old Melmoth, who, shortly after the commencement of the prayers, turned towards the old housekeeper, and said, in a tone scandalously audible, "Go down and draw the niggers of the kitchen fire closer, and lock the door, and let me *hear it locked.* I can't mind any thing till that's done." The other was from John Melmoth gliding into the room, hearing the inappropriate words uttered by the ignorant woman, taking quietly as he knelt beside her the

prayer-book from her hands, and reading in a suppressed voice part of that solemn service which, by the forms of the Church of England, is intended for the consolation of the departing.

"That is John's voice," said the dying man; and the little kindness he had ever shewed this unfortunate lad rushed on his hard heart at this moment, and touched it. He saw himself, too, surrounded by heartless and rapacious menials; and slight as must have been his dependence on a relative whom he had always treated as a stranger, he felt at this hour he was no stranger, and grasped at his support like a straw amid his wreck. "John, my good boy, you are there.—I kept you far from me when living, and now you are nearest me when dying.—John, *read on.*" John, affected deeply by the situation in which he beheld this *poor man*, amid all his wealth, as well as by the solemn request to impart consolation to his dying moments, read on;—but in a short time his voice

became indistinct, from the horror with which he listened to the increasing hiccup of the patient, which, however, he struggled with from time to time, to ask the housekeeper if *the niggers were closed.* John, who was a lad of feeling, rose from his knees in some degree of agitation. "What, are you leaving me like the rest?" said old Melmoth, trying to raise himself in the bed. "No, Sir," said John; "but," observing the altered looks of the dying man, "I think you want some refreshment, some support, Sir." "Aye, I do, I do, but whom can I trust to get it for me. *They*, (and his haggard eye wandered round the groupe), *they* would poison me." "Trust me, Sir," said John; "I will go to the apothecary's, or whoever you may employ." The old man grasped his hand, drew him close to his bed, cast a threatening yet fearful eye round the party, and then whispered in a voice of agonized constraint, "I want a glass of wine,

it would keep me alive for some hours, but there is not one I can trust to get it for me,—*they'd steal a bottle, and ruin me.*" John was greatly shocked. "Sir, for God's sake, let *me* get a glass of wine for you." "Do you know where?" said the old man, with an expression in his face John could not understand. "No, Sir; you know I have been rather a stranger here, Sir." "Take this key," said old Melmoth, after a violent spasm; "take this key, there is wine in that closet,—*Madeira.* I always told them there was nothing there, but they did not believe me, or I should not have been robbed as I have been. At one time I said it was whiskey, and then I fared worse than ever, for they drank twice as much of it."

John took the key from his uncle's hand; the dying man pressed it as he did so, and John, interpreting this as a mark of kindness, returned the pressure. He was undeceived by the whisper that followed,—"John, my lad, don't drink any

of that wine while you are there." "Good God!" said John, indignantly throwing the key on the bed; then, recollecting that the miserable being before him was no object of resentment, he gave the promise required, and entered the closet, which no foot but that of old Melmoth had entered for nearly sixty years. He had some difficulty in finding out the wine, and indeed staid long enough to justify his uncle's suspicions,—but his mind was agitated, and his hand unsteady. He could not but remark his uncle's extraordinary look, that had the ghastliness of fear superadded to that of death, as he gave him permission to enter his closet. He could not but see the looks of horror which the women exchanged as he approached it. And, finally, when he was in it, his memory was malicious enough to suggest some faint traces of a story, too horrible for imagination, connected with it. He remembered in one moment most distinctly, that no

one but his uncle had ever been known to enter it for many years.

Before he quitted it, he held up the dim light, and looked around him with a mixture of terror and curiosity. There was a great deal of decayed and useless lumber, such as might be supposed to be heaped up to rot in a miser's closet; but John's eyes were in a moment, and as if by magic, rivetted on a portrait that hung on the wall, and appeared, even to his untaught eye, far superior to the tribe of family pictures that are left to moulder on the walls of a family mansion. It represented a man of middle age. There was nothing remarkable in the costume, or in the countenance, but *the eyes*, John felt, were such as one feels they wish they had never seen, and feels they can never forget. Had he been acquainted with the poetry of Southey, he might have often exclaimed in his after-life,

"Only the eyes had life,
They gleamed with demon light."—THALABA.

From an impulse equally resistless and painful, he approached the portrait, held the candle towards it, and could distinguish the words on the border of the painting,—Jno. Melmoth, anno 1646. John was neither timid by nature, or nervous by constitution, or superstitious from habit, yet he continued to gaze in stupid horror on this singular picture, till, aroused by his uncle's cough, he hurried into his room. The old man swallowed the wine. He appeared a little revived; it was long since he had tasted such a cordial,—his heart appeared to expand to a momentary confidence. "John, what did you see in that room?" "Nothing, Sir." "That's a lie; every one wants to cheat or to rob me." "Sir, I don't want to do either." "Well, what did you see that you—you took notice of?" "Only a picture, Sir." "A picture, Sir!—the original is still alive." John, though under the impression of his recent feelings, could not but look incredulous.

"John," whispered his uncle;—"John, they say I am dying of this and that; and one says it is for want of nourishment, and one says it is for want of medicine,—but, John," and his face looked hideously ghastly, "I am dying of a fright. That man," and he extended his meagre arm toward the closet, as if he was pointing to a living being; "that man, I have good reason to know, is alive still." "How is that possible, Sir?" said John involuntarily, "the date on the picture is 1646." "You have seen it,—you have noticed it," said his uncle. "Well,"—he rocked and nodded on his bolster for a moment, then, grasping John's hand with an unutterable look, he exclaimed, "You will see him again, he is alive." Then, sinking back on his bolster, he fell into a kind of sleep or stupor, his eyes still open, and fixed on John.

The house was now perfectly silent, and John had time and space for reflection. More thoughts came crowding on him

than he wished to welcome, but they would not be repulsed. He thought of his uncle's habits and character, turned the matter over and over again in his mind, and he said to himself, "The last man on earth to be superstitious. He never thought of any thing but the price of stocks, and the rate of exchange, and my college expences, that hung heavier at his heart than all; and such a man to die of a fright,—a ridiculous fright, that a man living 150 years ago is alive still, and yet—he is dying." John paused, for facts will confute the most stubborn logician. "With all his hardness of mind, and of heart, he is dying of a fright. I heard it in the kitchen, I have heard it from himself,—he could not be deceived. If I had ever heard he was nervous, or fanciful, or superstitious, but a character so contrary to all these impressions;—a man that, as poor Butler says, in his Remains of the Antiquarian, would have "sold Christ over again for the numerical piece of silver which

Judas got for him,"—such a man to die of fear! Yet he *is* dying," said John, glancing his fearful eye on the contracted nostril, the glazed eye, the dropping jaw, the whole horrible apparatus of the *facies Hippocratica* displayed, and soon to cease its display.

Old Melmoth at this moment seemed to be in a deep stupor; his eyes lost that little expression they had before, and his hands, that had convulsively been catching at the blankets, let go their short and quivering grasp, and lay extended on the bed like the claws of some bird that had died of hunger,—so meagre, so yellow, so spread. John, unaccustomed to the sight of death, believed this to be only a sign that he was going to sleep; and, urged by an impulse for which he did not attempt to account to himself, caught up the miserable light, and once more ventured into the forbidden room,—the *blue chamber* of the dwelling. The motion roused the dying man;—he sat bolt upright in his bed.

This John could not see, for he was now in the closet; but he heard the groan, or rather the choaked and guggling rattle of the throat, that announces the horrible conflict between muscular and mental convulsion. He started, turned away; but, as he turned away, he thought he saw the eyes of the portrait, on which his own was fixed, *move*, and hurried back to his uncle's bedside.

Old Melmoth died in the course of that night, and died as he had lived, in a kind of avaricious delirium. John could not have imagined a scene so horrible as his last hours presented. He cursed and blasphemed about three half-pence, missing, as he said, some weeks before, in an account of change with his groom, about hay to a starved horse that he kept. Then he grasped John's hand, and asked him to give him the sacrament. "If I send to the clergyman, he will charge me something for it, which I cannot pay,—I cannot. They say I am rich,—look at this blanket;—but I would

not mind that, if I could save my soul." And, raving, he added, "Indeed, Doctor, I am a very poor man. I never troubled a clergyman before, and all I want is, that you will grant me two trifling requests, very little matters in your way,—save my soul, and (whispering) make interest to get me a parish coffin,—I have not enough left to bury me. I always told every one I was poor, but the more I told them so, the less they believed me."

John, greatly shocked, retired from the bed-side, and sat down in a distant corner of the room. The women were again in the room, which was very dark. Melmoth was silent from exhaustion, and there was a death-like pause for some time. At this moment John saw the door open, and a figure appear at it, who looked round the room, and then quietly and deliberately retired, but not before John had discovered in his face the living original of the portrait. His first impulse was to utter an exclamation of terror, but his

breath felt stopped. He was then rising to pursue the figure, but a moment's reflection checked him. What could be more absurd, than to be alarmed or amazed at a resemblance between a living man and the portrait of a dead one! The likeness was doubtless strong enough to strike him even in that darkened room, but it was doubtless only a likeness; and though it might be imposing enough to terrify an old man of gloomy and retired habits, and with a broken constitution, John resolved it should not produce the same effect on him.

But while he was applauding himself for this resolution, the door opened, and the figure appeared at it, beckoning and nodding to him, with a familiarity somewhat terrifying. John now started up, determined to pursue it; but the pursuit was stopped by the weak but shrill cries of his uncle, who was struggling at once with the agonies of death and his housekeeper. The poor woman, anxious for

her master's reputation and her own, was trying to put on him a clean shirt and nightcap, and Melmoth, who had just sensation enough to perceive they were taking something from him, continued exclaiming feebly, "They are robbing me, —robbing me in my last moments,—robbing a dying man. John, won't you assist me,—I shall die a beggar; they are taking my last shirt,—I shall die a beggar."——And the miser died.

CHAPTER II.

You that wander, scream, and groan,
Round the mansions once your own.
ROWE.

A FEW days after the funeral, the will was opened before proper witnesses, and John was found to be left sole heir to his uncle's property, which, though originally moderate, had, by his grasping habits, and parsimonious life, become very considerable.

As the attorney who read the will concluded, he added, "There are some words

here, at the corner of the parchment, which do not appear to be part of the will, as they are neither in the form of a codicil, nor is the signature of the testator affixed to them; but, to the best of my belief, they are in the hand-writing of the deceased." As he spoke he shewed the lines to Melmoth, who immediately recognized his uncle's hand, (that perpendicular and penurious hand, that seems determined to make the most of the very paper, thriftily abridging every word, and leaving scarce an atom of margin), and read, not without some emotion, the following words: "I enjoin my nephew and heir, John Melmoth, to remove, destroy, or cause to be destroyed, the portrait inscribed J. Melmoth, 1646, hanging in my closet. I also enjoin him to search for a manuscript, which I think he will find in the third and lowest left-hand drawer of the mahogany chest standing under that portrait,—it is among some papers of no value, such as manuscript sermons, and pamphlets on the

improvement of Ireland, and such stuff; he will distinguish it by its being tied round with a black tape, and the paper being very mouldy and discoloured. He may read it if he will;—I think he had better not. At all events, I adjure him, if there be any power in the adjuration of a dying man, to burn it."

After reading this singular memorandum, the business of the meeting was again resumed; and as old Melmoth's will was very clear and legally worded, all was soon settled, the party dispersed, and John Melmoth was left alone.

We should have mentioned, that his guardians appointed by the will (for he was not yet of age) advised him to return to College, and complete his education as soon as proper; but John urged the expediency of paying the respect due to his uncle's memory, by remaining a decent time in the house after his decease. This was not his real motive. Curiosity, or something that perhaps deserves a better

name, the wild and awful pursuit of an indefinite object, had taken strong hold of his mind. His guardians (who were men of respectability and property in the neighbourhood, and in whose eyes John's consequence had risen rapidly since the reading of the will), pressed him to accept of a temporary residence in their respective houses, till his return to Dublin. This was declined gratefully, but steadily. They called for their horses, shook hands with the heir, and rode off—Melmoth was left alone.

The remainder of the day was passed in gloomy and anxious deliberation,—in traversing his late uncle's room,—approaching the door of the closet, and then retreating from it,—in watching the clouds, and listening to the wind, as if the gloom of the one, or the murmurs of the other, relieved instead of increasing the weight that pressed on his mind. Finally, towards evening, he summoned the old woman, from whom he expected something like an

explanation of the extraordinary circumstances he had witnessed since his arrival at his uncle's. The old woman, proud of the summons, readily attended, but she had very little to tell,—her communication was nearly in the following words: (We spare the reader her endless circumlocutions, her Irishcisms, and the frequent interruptions arising from her applications to her snuff-box, and to the glass of whiskey punch with which Melmoth took care to have her supplied). The old woman deposed, "That his honor (as she always called the deceased) was always intent upon the little room inside his bed-chamber, and reading there, within the last two years;—that people, knowing his honor had money, and thinking it must be there, had broke into that room, (in other words, there was a robbery attempted there), but finding nothing but some papers, they had retired;—that he was so frightened, he had bricked up the window; but *she thought there was more*

in it than that, for when his honor missed but a half-penny, he would make the house ring about it, but that, when the closet was bricked up, he never said a word;—that afterwards his honor used to lock himself up in his own room, and though he was never fond of reading, was always found, when his dinner was brought him, hanging over a paper, which he hid the moment any one came into the room, and once there was a great bustle about a picture that he tried to conceal;—that knowing there was an *odd story in the family*, she did her best to come at it, and even went to Biddy Brannigan's, (the medical Sybil before mentioned), to find out the rights of it; but Biddy only shook her head, filled her pipe, uttered some words she did not understand, and smoked on;—that it was but two evenings before his honor *was struck*, (*i. e.* took ill), she was standing at the door of the court, (which had once been surrounded by stables, pigeon-house, and all the usual et-

ceteras of a gentleman's residence, but now presented only a ruinous range of dismantled out-offices, thatched with thistles, and tenanted by pigs), when his honor called to her to lock the door, (his honor was always *keen* about locking the doors early); she was hastening to do so, when he snatched the key from her, swearing at her, (for he was always very keen about locking the doors, though the locks were so bad, and the keys so rusty, that it was always like *the cry of the dead* in the house when the keys were turned);—that she stood aside for a minute, seeing he was angry, and gave him the key, when she heard him utter a scream, and saw him fall across the door-way;—that she hurried to raise him, *hoping* it was a fit;—that she found him stiff and stretched out, and called for help to lift him up;—that then people came from the kitchen to assist;—that she was so bewildered and terrified, she hardly knew what was done or said; but with all her terror remembered,

that as they raised him up, the first sign of life he gave was lifting up his arm, and pointing it towards the court, and at that moment she saw the figure of a tall man cross the court, and go out of the court, she knew not where or how, for the outer gate was locked, and had not been opened for years, and they were all gathered round his honor at the other door;—she saw the figure,—she saw the shadow on the wall,—she saw him walk slowly through the court, and in her terror cried, "Stop him," but nobody minded her, all being busy about her master; and when he was brought to his room, nobody thought but of getting him to himself again. And further she could not tell. His honor (young Melmoth) knew as much as she,—he had witnessed his last illness, had heard his last words, he saw him die,—how could she know more than his honor."

"True," said Melmoth, "I certainly saw him die; but—you say *there was an odd story in the family,* do you know any

thing about it?" "Not a word, it was long before my time, as old as I am." "Certainly it must have been so; but, was my uncle ever superstitious, fanciful?"—and Melmoth was compelled to use many synonymous expressions, before he could make himself understood. When he did, the answer was plain and decisive, "No, never, never. When his honor sat in the kitchen in winter, to save a fire in his own room, he could never bear the talk of the old women that came in to light their pipes *betimes*, (from time to time). He used to shew such impatience of their superstitious nonsense, that they were fain to smoke them in silence, without the consolatory accompaniment of one whisper about a child that the evil eye had looked on, or another, that though apparently a mewling, peevish, crippled brat all day, went regularly out at night to dance with the *good people* on the top of a neighbouring mountain, summoned thereto by the sound of a bag-pipe, which was unfailing-

ly heard at the cabin door every night." Melmoth's thoughts began to take somewhat of a darker hue at this account. If his uncle was not superstitious, might he not have been guilty, and might not his strange and sudden death, and even the terrible visitation that preceded it, have been owing to some wrong that his rapacity had done the widow and the fatherless. He questioned the old woman indirectly and cautiously on the subject,—her answer completely justified the deceased. "He was a man," she said, "of a hard hand, and a hard heart, but he was as jealous of another's right as of his own. He would have starved all the world, but he would not have wronged it of a farthing."

Melmoth's last resource was to send for Biddy Brannigan, who was still in the house, and from whom he at least hoped to hear the odd story that the old woman confessed was in the family. She came, and, on her introduction to Melmoth, it

was curious to observe the mingled look of servility and command, the result of the habits of her life, which was alternately one of abject mendicity, and of arrogant but clever imposture. When she first appeared, she stood at the door, awed and curtseying in the presence, and muttering sounds which, possibly intended for blessings, had, from the harsh tone and witch-like look of the speaker, every appearance of malediction; but when interrogated on the subject of the story, she rose at once into consequence,—her figure seemed frightfully dilated, like that of Virgil's Alecto, who exchanges in a moment the appearance of a feeble old woman for that of a menacing fury. She walked deliberately across the room, seated, or rather squatted herself on the hearth-stone like a hare in her form, spread her bony and withered hands towards the blaze, and rocked for a considerable time in silence before she commenced her tale. When she had finished it, Melmoth remained in

astonishment at the state of mind to which the late singular circumstances had reduced him,—at finding himself listening with varying and increasing emotions of interest, curiosity, and terror, to a tale so wild, so improbable, nay, so actually incredible, that he at least blushed for the folly he could not conquer. The result of these impressions was, a resolution to visit the closet, and examine the manuscript that very night.

This resolution he found it impossible to execute immediately, for, on inquiring for lights, the gouvernante confessed the very last had been burnt at *his honor's* wake; and a bare-footed boy was charged to run for life and death to the neighbouring village for candles; and if you could *borry* a couple of candlesticks, added the housekeeper. "Are there no candlesticks in the house?" said Melmoth. "There are, honey, plinty, but it's no time to be opening the old chest, for the plated ones, in regard of their being at the bottom of

it, and the brass ones that's *in it* (in the house), one of them has no socket, and the other has no bottom." "And how did you make shift yourself," said Melmoth. "I stuck it in a potatoe," quoth the housekeeper. So the *gossoon* ran for life and death, and Melmoth, towards the close of the evening, was left alone to meditate.

It was an evening apt for meditation, and Melmoth had his fill of it before the messenger returned. The weather was cold and gloomy; heavy clouds betokened a long and dreary continuance of autumnal rains; cloud after cloud came sweeping on like the dark banners of an approaching host, whose march is for desolation. As Melmoth leaned against the window, whose dismantled frame, and pieced and shattered panes, shook with every gust of wind, his eye encountered nothing but that most cheerless of all prospects, a miser's garden, —walls broken down, grass-grown walks whose grass was not even green, dwarfish, doddered, leafless trees, and a luxuriant

crop of nettles and weeds rearing their unlovely heads where there had once been flowers, all waving and bending in capricious and unsightly forms, as the wind sighed over them. It was the verdure of the church-yard, the garden of death. He turned for relief to the room, but no relief was there,—the wainscotting dark with dirt, and in many places cracked and starting from the walls,—the rusty grate, so long unconscious of a fire, that nothing but a sullen smoke could be coaxed to issue from between its dingy bars,—the crazy chairs, their torn bottoms of rush drooping inwards, and the great leathern seat displaying the stuffing round the worn edges, while the nails, though they kept their places, had failed to keep the covering they once fastened,—the chimney-piece, which, tarnished more by time than by smoke, displayed for its garniture half a pair of snuffers, a tattered almanack of 1750, a time-keeper dumb for want of repair, and a rusty fowling-piece without a

lock.—No wonder the spectacle of desolation drove Melmoth back to his own thoughts, restless and uncomfortable as they were. He recapitulated the Sybil's story word by word, with the air of a man who is cross-examining an evidence, and trying to make him contradict himself.

"The first of the Melmoths, she says, who settled in Ireland, was an officer in Cromwell's army, who obtained a grant of lands, the confiscated property of an Irish family attached to the royal cause. The elder brother of this man was one who had travelled abroad, and resided so long on the Continent, that his family had lost all recollection of him. Their memory was not stimulated by their affection, for there were strange reports concerning the traveller. He was said to be (like the "damned magician, great Glendower,") "a gentleman profited in strange concealments."

It must be remembered, that at this period, and even to a later, the belief in astrology and witchcraft was very general.

Even so late as the reign of Charles II. Dryden calculated the nativity of his son Charles, the ridiculous books of Glanville were in general circulation, and Delrio and Wierus were so popular, that even a dramatic writer (Shadwell) quoted copiously from them, in the notes subjoined to his curious comedy of the Lancashire witches. It was said, that during the life-time of Melmoth, the traveller paid him a visit; and though he must have then been considerably advanced in life, to the astonishment of his family, he did not betray the slightest trace of being a year older than when they last beheld him. His visit was short, he said nothing of the past or the future, nor did his family question him. It was said that they did not feel themselves perfectly at ease in his presence. On his departure he left them his picture, (the same which Melmoth saw in the closet, bearing date 1646), and they saw him no more. Some years after, a person arrived from England, directed to

Melmoth's house, in pursuit of the traveller, and exhibiting the most marvellous and unappeasable solicitude to obtain some intelligence of him. The family could give him none, and after some days of restless inquiry and agitation, he departed, leaving behind him, either through negligence or intention, a manuscript, containing an extraordinary account of the circumstances under which he had met John Melmoth the Traveller (as he was called).

The manuscript and portrait were both preserved, and of the original a report spread that he was still alive, and had been frequently seen in Ireland even to the present century,—but that he was never known to appear but on the approaching death of one of the family, nor even then, unless when the evil passions or habits of the individual had cast a shade of gloomy and fearful interest over their dying hour.

It was therefore judged no favourable augury for the spiritual destination of the last Melmoth, that this extraordinary per-

son had visited, or been imagined to visit, the house previous to his decease."

Such was the account given by Biddy Brannigan, to which she added her own solemnly-attested belief, that John Melmoth the Traveller was still without a hair on his head changed, or a muscle in his frame contracted;—that she had seen those that had seen him, and would confirm their evidence by oath if necessary;—that he was never heard to speak, seen to partake of food, or known to enter any dwelling but that of his family;—and, finally, that she herself believed that his late appearance boded no good either to the living or the dead.

John was still musing on these things when the lights were procured, and, disregarding the pallid countenances and monitory whispers of the attendants, he resolutely entered the closet, shut the door, and proceeded to search for the manuscript. It was soon found, for the directions of old Melmoth were forcibly written, and

strongly remembered. The manuscript, old, tattered, and discoloured, was taken from the very drawer in which it was mentioned to be laid. Melmoth's hands felt as cold as those of his dead uncle, when he drew the blotted pages from their nook. He sat down to read,—there was a dead silence through the house. Melmoth looked wistfully at the candles, snuffed them, and still thought they looked dim, (perchance he thought they burned blue, but such thought he kept to himself.) Certain it is, he often changed his posture, and would have changed his chair, had there been more than one in the apartment.

He sunk for a few moments into a fit of gloomy abstraction, till the sound of the clock striking twelve made him start,—it was the only sound he had heard for some hours, and the sounds produced by inanimate things, while all living beings around are as dead, have at such an hour an effect indescribably awful. John looked at his manuscript with some reluctance, opened

it, paused over the first lines, and as the wind sighed round the desolate apartment, and the rain pattered with a mournful sound against the dismantled window, wished——what did he wish for?—he wished the sound of the wind less dismal, and the dash of the rain less monotonous. ——He may be forgiven, it was past midnight, and there was not a human being awake but himself within ten miles when he began to read.

CHAPTER III.

Apparebat eidolon *senex*.

PLINY.

THE manuscript was discoloured, obliterated, and mutilated beyond any that had ever before exercised the patience of a reader. Michaelis himself, scrutinizing into the pretended autograph of St Mark at Venice, never had a harder time of it.---Melmoth could make out only a sentence here and there. The writer, it appeared, was an Englishman of the name of Stanton, who had travelled abroad shortly after

the Restoration. Travelling was not then attended with the facilities which modern improvement has introduced, and scholars and literati, the intelligent, the idle, and the curious, wandered over the Continent for years, like *Tom. Coryat*, though they had the modesty, on their return, to entitle the result of their multiplied observations and labours only "crudities."

Stanton, about the year 1676, was in Spain; he was, like most of the travellers of that age, a man of literature, intelligence, and curiosity, but ignorant of the language of the country, and fighting his way at times from convent to convent, in quest of what was called "Hospitality," that is, obtaining board and lodging on the condition of holding a debate in Latin, on some point theological or metaphysical, with any monk who would become the champion of the strife. Now, as the theology was Catholic, and the metaphysics Aristotelian, Stanton sometimes wished himself at the miserable Posada from

whose filth and famine he had been fighting his escape; but though his reverend antagonists always denounced his creed, and comforted themselves, even in defeat, with the assurance that he must be damned, on the double score of his being a heretic and an Englishman, they were obliged to confess that his Latin was good, and his logic unanswerable; and he was allowed, in most cases, to sup and sleep in peace. This was not doomed to be his fate on the night of the 17th August 1677, when he found himself in the plains of Valencia, deserted by a cowardly guide, who had been terrified by the sight of a cross erected as a memorial of a murder, had slipped off his mule unperceived, crossing himself every step he took on his retreat from the heretic, and left Stanton amid the terrors of an approaching storm, and the dangers of an unknown country. The sublime and yet softened beauty of the scenery around, had filled the soul of Stanton with delight, and he enjoyed that

delight as Englishmen generally do, silently.

The magnificent remains of two dynasties that had passed away, the ruins of Roman palaces, and of Moorish fortresses, were around and above him;—the dark and heavy thunder-clouds that advanced slowly, seemed like the shrouds of these spectres of departed greatness; they approached, but did not yet overwhelm or conceal them, as if nature herself was for once awed by the power of man; and far below, the lovely valley of Valencia blushed and burned in all the glory of sunset, like a bride receiving the last glowing kiss of the bridegroom before the approach of night. Stanton gazed around. The difference between the architecture of the Roman and Moorish ruins struck him. Among the former are the remains of a theatre, and something like a public place; the latter present only the remains of fortresses, embattled, castellated, and fortified from top to bottom,—not a loop-hole for

pleasure to get in by,—the loop-holes were only for arrows; all denoted military power and despotic subjugation *a l'outrance*. The contrast might have pleased a philosopher, and he might have indulged in the reflection, that though the ancient Greeks and Romans were savages, (as Dr Johnson says all people who want a press must be, and he says truly), yet they were wonderful savages for their time, for they alone have left *traces of their taste for pleasure* in the countries they conquered, in their superb theatres, temples, (which were also dedicated to pleasure one way or another), and baths, while other conquering bands of savages never left any thing behind them but traces of their rage for power. So thought Stanton, as he still saw strongly defined, though darkened by the darkening clouds, the huge skeleton of a Roman amphitheatre, its arched and gigantic colonnades now admitting a gleam of light, and now commingling with the purple thunder-cloud; and now the solid

and heavy mass of a Moorish fortress, no light playing between its impermeable walls,—the image of power, dark, isolated, impenetrable. Stanton forgot his cowardly guide, his loneliness, his danger amid an approaching storm and an inhospitable country, where his name and country would shut every door against him, and every peal of thunder would be supposed justified by the daring intrusion of a heretic in the dwelling of an *old Christian*, as the Spanish Catholics absurdly term themselves, to mark the distinction between them and the baptised Moors.—All this was forgot in contemplating the glorious and awful scenery before him,—light struggling with darkness,—and darkness menacing a light still more terrible, and announcing its menace in the blue and livid mass of cloud that hovered like a destroying angel in the air, its arrows aimed, but their direction awfully indefinite. But he ceased to forget these local and petty dangers, as the sublimity of romance

would term them, when he saw the first flash of the lightning, broad and red as the banners of an insulting army whose motto is *Væ victis*, shatter to atoms the remains of a Roman tower;—the rifted stones rolled down the hill, and fell at the feet of Stanton. He stood appalled, and, awaiting his summons from the Power in whose eye pyramids, palaces, and the worms whose toil has formed them, and the worms who toil out their existence under their shadow or their pressure, are perhaps all alike contemptible, he stood collected, and for a moment felt that defiance of danger which danger itself excites, and we love to encounter it as a physical enemy, to bid it "do its worst," and feel that its worst will perhaps be ultimately its best for us. He stood and saw another flash dart its bright, brief, and malignant glance over the ruins of ancient power, and the luxuriance of recent fertility. Singular contrast! The relics of art for ever decaying,—the productions of na-

ture for ever renewed.—(Alas! for what purpose are they renewed, better than to mock at the perishable monuments which men try in vain to rival them by). The pyramids themselves must perish, but the grass that grows between their disjointed stones will be renewed from year to year. Stanton was thinking thus, when all power of thought was suspended, by seeing two persons bearing between them the body of a young, and apparently very lovely girl, who had been struck dead by the lightning. Stanton approached, and heard the voices of the bearers repeating, "There is none who will mourn for her!" "There is none who will mourn for her!" said other voices, as two more bore in their arms the blasted and blackened figure of what had once been a man, comely and graceful;—"there is not *one* to mourn for her now!" They were lovers, and he had been consumed by the flash that had destroyed her, while in the act of endeavouring to defend her. As they were about

to remove the bodies, a person approached with a calmness of step and demeanour, as if he were alone unconscious of danger, and incapable of fear; and after looking on them for some time, burst into a laugh so loud, wild, and protracted, that the peasants, starting with as much horror at the sound as at that of the storm, hurried away, bearing the corse with them. Even Stanton's fears were subdued by his astonishment, and, turning to the stranger, who remained standing on the same spot, he asked the reason of such an outrage on humanity. The stranger, slowly turning round, and disclosing a countenance which ——(Here the manuscript was illegible for a few lines), said in English—— (A long hiatus followed here, and the next passage that was legible, though it proved to be a continuation of the narrative, was but a fragment). * *

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The terrors of the night rendered Stanton a sturdy and unappeasable applicant; and the shrill voice of the old woman, re-

peating, " no heretic—no English—Mother of God protect us—avaunt Satan!"—combined with the clatter of the wooden casement (peculiar to the houses in Valentia) which she opened to discharge her volley of anathematization, and shut again as the lightning glanced through the aperture, were unable to repel his importunate request for admittance, in a night whose terrors ought to soften all the miserable petty local passions into one awful feeling of fear for the Power who caused it, and compassion for those who were exposed to it.—But Stanton felt there was something more than national bigotry in the exclamations of the old woman; there was a peculiar and personal horror of the English.—And he was right; but this did not diminish the eagerness of his *

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The house was handsome and spacious, but the melancholy appearance of desertion * * *

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---The benches were by the wall, but there were none to sit there; the tables were spread in what had been the hall, but it seemed as if none had gathered round them for many years;—the clock struck audibly, there was no voice of mirth or of occupation to drown its sound; time told his awful lesson to silence alone;—the hearths were black with fuel long since consumed;—the family portraits looked as if they were the only tenants of the mansion; they seemed to say, from their mouldering frames, "there are none to gaze on us;" and the echo of the steps of Stanton and his feeble guide, was the only sound audible between the peals of thunder that rolled still awfully, but more distantly,—every peal like the exhausted murmurs of a spent heart. As they passed on, a shriek was heard. Stanton paused, and fearful images of the dangers to which travellers on the Continent are exposed in deserted and remote habitations, came into his mind. "Don't heed it," said the old wo-

man, lighting him on with a miserable lamp;—"it is only he * * *
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The old woman having now satisfied herself, by ocular demonstration, that her English guest, even if he was the devil, had neither horn, hoof, or tail, that he could bear the sign of the cross without changing his form, and that, when he spoke, not a puff of sulphur came out of his mouth, began to take courage, and at length commenced her story, which, weary and comfortless as Stanton was, *

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"Every obstacle was now removed; parents and relations at last gave up all opposition, and the young pair were united. Never was there a lovelier,—they seemed like angels who had only anticipated by a few years their celestial and eternal union. The marriage was solemnized with much pomp, and a few days after there was a feast in that very wainscotted chamber which you paused to remark was so gloomy. It was that night hung with rich tapestry,

representing the exploits of the Cid, particularly that of his burning a few Moors who refused to renounce their accursed religion. They were represented beautifully tortured, writhing and howling, and "Mahomet! Mahomet!" issuing out of their mouths, as they called on him in their burning agonies;—you could almost hear them scream. At the upper end of the room, under a splendid estrade, over which was an image of the blessed Virgin, sat Donna Isabella de Cardoza, mother to the bride, and near her Donna Ines, the bride, on rich almohadas; the bridegroom sat opposite to her; and though they never spoke to each other, their eyes, slowly raised, but suddenly withdrawn, (those eyes that blushed), told to each other the delicious secret of their happiness. Don Pedro de Cardoza had assembled a large party in honour of his daughter's nuptials; among them was an Englishman of the name of *Melmoth*, a traveller; no one knew who had brought him

there. He sat silent like the rest, while the iced waters and the sugared wafers were presented to the company. The night was intensely hot, and the moon glowed like a sun over the ruins of Saguntum; the embroidered blinds flapped heavily, as if the wind made an effort to raise them in vain, and then desisted.

(Another defect in the manuscript occurred here, but it was soon supplied).

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"The company were dispersed through various alleys of the garden; the bridegroom and bride wandered through one where the delicious perfume of the orange trees mingled itself with that of the myrtles in blow. On their return to the hall, both of them asked, Had the company heard the exquisite sounds that floated through the garden just before they quitted it? No one had heard them. They expressed their surprise. The Englishman had never quitted the hall; it was said he smiled with a most particular and extraordinary

expression as the remark was made. His silence had been noticed before, but it was ascribed to his ignorance of the Spanish language, an ignorance that Spaniards are not anxious either to expose or remove by speaking to a stranger. The subject of the music was not again reverted to till the guests were seated at supper, when Donna Ines and her young husband, exchanging a smile of delighted surprise, exclaimed they heard the same delicious sounds floating round them. The guests listened, but no one else could hear it;—every one felt there was something extraordinary in this. Hush! was uttered by every voice almost at the same moment. A dead silence followed,—you would think, from their intent looks, that they listened with their very eyes. This deep silence, contrasted with the splendour of the feast, and the light effused from torches held by the domestics, produced a singular effect,—it seemed for some moments like an as-

sembly of the dead. The silence was interrupted, though the cause of wonder had not ceased, by the entrance of Father Olavida, the Confessor of Donna Isabella, who had been called away previous to the feast, to administer extreme unction to a dying man in the neighbourhood. He was a priest of uncommon sanctity, beloved in the family, and respected in the neighbourhood, where he had displayed uncommon taste and talents for exorcism; —in fact, this was the good Father's *forte*, and he piqued himself on it accordingly. The devil never fell into worse hands than Father Olavida's, for when he was so contumacious as to resist Latin, and even the first verses of the Gospel of St John in Greek, which the good Father never had recourse to but in cases of extreme stubbornness and difficulty,—(here Stanton recollected the English story of the *Boy of Bilson*, and blushed even in Spain for his countrymen),—then he always applied to

the Inquisition; and if the devils were ever so obstinate before, they were always seen to fly out of the possessed, just as, in the midst of their cries, (no doubt of blasphemy), they were tied to the stake. Some held out even till the flames surrounded them; but even the most stubborn must have been dislodged when the operation was over, for the devil himself could no longer tenant a crisp and glutinous lump of cinders. Thus Father Olavida's fame spread far and wide, and the Cardoza family had made uncommon interest to procure him for a Confessor, and happily succeeded. The ceremony he had just been performing, had cast a shade over the good Father's countenance, but it dispersed as he mingled among the guests, and was introduced to them. Room was soon made for him, and he happened accidentally to be seated opposite the Englishman. As the wine was presented to him, Father Olavida, (who, as I observed,

was a man of singular sanctity), prepared to utter a short internal prayer. He hesitated,—trembled,—desisted; and, putting down the wine, wiped the drops from his forehead with the sleeve of his habit. Donna Isabella gave a sign to a domestic, and other wine of a higher quality was offered to him. His lips moved, as if in the effort to pronounce a benediction on it and the company, but the effort again failed; and the change in his countenance was so extraordinary, that it was perceived by all the guests. He felt the sensation that his extraordinary appearance excited, and attempted to remove it by again endeavouring to lift the cup to his lips. So strong was the anxiety with which the company watched him, that the only sound heard in that spacious and crowded hall, was the rustling of his habit, as he attempted to lift the cup to his lips once more—in vain. The guests sat in astonished silence. Father Olavida alone re-

mained standing; but at that moment the Englishman rose, and appeared determined to fix Olavida's regards by a gaze like that of fascination. Olavida rocked, reeled, grasped the arm of a page, and at last, closing his eyes for a moment, as if to escape the horrible fascination of that unearthly glare, (the Englishman's eyes were observed by all the guests, from the moment of his entrance, to effuse a most fearful and preternatural lustre), exclaimed, "Who is among us?—Who?—I cannot utter a blessing while he is here. I cannot feel one. Where he treads, the earth is parched!—Where he breathes, the air is fire!—Where he feeds, the food is poison!—Where he turns, his glance is lightning!—*Who is among us?—Who?*" repeated the priest in the agony of adjuration, while his cowl fallen back, his few thin hairs around the scalp instinct and alive with terrible emotion, his outspread arms protruded from the sleeves of his

habit, and extended towards the awful stranger, suggested the idea of an inspired being in the dreadful rapture of prophetic denunciation. He stood—still stood, and the Englishman stood calmly opposite to him. There was an agitated irregularity in the attitudes of those around them, which contrasted strongly the fixed and stern postures of those two, who remained gazing silently at each other. "Who knows him?" exclaimed Olavida, starting apparently from a trance; "who knows him? who brought him here?"

The guests severally disclaimed all knowledge of the Englishman, and each asked the other in whispers, "who *had* brought him there?" Father Olavida then pointed his arm to each of the company, and asked each individually, "Do you know him?" "No! no! no!" was uttered with vehement emphasis by every individual. "But I know him," said Olavida, "by these cold drops!" and

he wiped them off;—" by these convulsed joints!" and he attempted to sign the cross, but could not. He raised his voice, and evidently speaking with increased difficulty,—" By this bread and wine, which the faithful receive as the body and blood of Christ, but which *his* presence converts into matter as viperous as the suicide foam of the dying Judas,—by all these—I know him, and command him to be gone!—He is—he is——" and he bent forwards as he spoke, and gazed on the Englishman with an expression which the mixture of rage, hatred, and fear, rendered terrible. All the guests rose at these words,—the whole company now presented two singular groupes, that of the amazed guests all collected together, and repeating, " Who, what is he?" and that of the Englishman, who stood unmoved, and Olavida, who dropped dead in the attitude of pointing to him. * * * * * *

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The body was removed into another room, and the departure of the Englishman was not noticed till the company returned to the hall. They sat late together, conversing on this extraordinary circumstance, and finally agreed to remain in the house, lest the evil spirit (for they believed the Englishman no better) should take certain liberties with the corse by no means agreeable to a Catholic, particularly as he had manifestly died without the benefit of the last sacraments. Just as this laudable resolution was formed, they were roused by cries of horror and agony from the bridal-chamber, where the young pair had retired.

They hurried to the door, but the father was first. They burst it open, and found the bride a corse in the arms of her husband. * * *

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He never recovered his reason; the family deserted the mansion rendered terrible by

so many misfortunes. One apartment is still tenanted by the unhappy maniac; his were the cries you heard as you traversed the deserted rooms. He is for the most part silent during the day, but at midnight he always exclaims, in a voice frightfully piercing, and hardly human, "They are coming! they are coming!" and relapses into profound silence.

The funeral of Father Olavida was attended by an extraordinary circumstance. He was interred in a neighbouring convent; and the reputation of his sanctity, joined to the interest caused by his extraordinary death, collected vast numbers at the ceremony. His funeral sermon was preached by a monk of distinguished eloquence, appointed for the purpose. To render the effect of his discourse more powerful, the corse, extended on a bier, with its face uncovered, was placed in the aisle. The monk took his text from one of the prophets,—"Death is gone up into

our palaces." He expatiated on mortality, whose approach, whether abrupt or lingering, is alike awful to man.—He spoke of the vicissitudes of empires with much eloquence and learning, but his audience were not observed to be much affected.—He cited various passages from the lives of the saints, descriptive of the glories of martyrdom, and the heroism of those who had bled and blazed for Christ and his blessed mother, but they appeared still waiting for something to touch them more deeply. When he inveighed against the tyrants under whose bloody persecutions those holy men suffered, his hearers were roused for a moment, for it is always easier to excite a passion than a moral feeling. But when he spoke of the dead, and pointed with emphatic gesture to the corse, as it lay before them cold and motionless, every eye was fixed, and every ear became attentive. Even the lovers, who, under pretence of dipping their fingers

into the holy water, were contriving to exchange amorous billets, forbore for one moment this interesting intercourse, to listen to the preacher. He dwelt with much energy on the virtues of the deceased, whom he declared to be a particular favourite of the Virgin; and enumerating the various losses that would be caused by his departure to the community to which he belonged, to society, and to religion at large; he at last worked up himself to a vehement expostulation with the Deity on the occasion. "Why hast thou," he exclaimed, "why hast thou, Oh God! thus dealt with us? Why hast thou snatched from our sight this glorious saint, whose merits, if properly applied, doubtless would have been sufficient to atone for the apostacy of St Peter, the opposition of St Paul, (previous to his conversion), and even the treachery of Judas himself? Why hast thou, Oh God! snatched him from us?"—and a deep and hollow voice

from among the congregation answersed, —"Because he deserved his fate." The murmurs of approbation with which the congregation honoured this apostrophe, half-drowned this extraordinary interruption; and though there was some little commotion in the immediate vicinity of the speaker, the rest of the audience continued to listen intently. "What," proceeded the preacher, pointing to the corse, "what hath laid thee there, servant of God?"—"Pride, ignorance, and fear," answered the same voice, in accents still more thrilling. The disturbance now became universal. The preacher paused, and a circle opening, disclosed the figure of a monk belonging to the convent, who stood among them. * * *

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After all the usual modes of admonition, exhortation, and discipline had been employed, and the bishop of the diocese, who, under the report of these extraordi-

nary circumstances, had visited the convent in person to obtain some explanation from the contumacious monk in vain, it was agreed, in a chapter extraordinary, to surrender him to the power of the Inquisition. He testified great horror when this determination was made known to him,—and offered to tell over and over again all that he *could* relate of the cause of Father Olavida's death. His humiliation, and repeated offers of confession, came too late. He was conveyed to the Inquisition. The proceedings of that tribunal are rarely disclosed, but there is a secret report (I cannot answer for its truth) of what he said and suffered there. On his first examination, he said he would relate all he *could*. He was told that was not enough, he must relate all he knew. * * * * * * * * *

"Why did you testify such horror at the funeral of Father Olavida?"—"Every one testified horror and grief at the death of

that venerable ecclesiastic, who died in the odour of sanctity. Had I done otherwise, it might have been reckoned a proof of my guilt." "Why did you interrupt the preacher with such extraordinary exclamations?"—To this no answer. "Why do you refuse to explain the meaning of those exclamations?"—No answer. "Why do you persist in this obstinate and dangerous silence? Look, I beseech you, brother, at the cross that is suspended against this wall," and the Inquisitor pointed to the large black crucifix at the back of the chair where he sat; "one drop of the blood shed there can purify you from all the sin you have ever committed; but all that blood, combined with the intercession of the Queen of Heaven, and the merits of all its martyrs, nay, even the absolution of the Pope, cannot deliver you from the curse of dying in unrepented sin."—"What sin, then, have I committed?" "The greatest of all possible

sins; you refuse answering the questions put to you at the tribunal of the most holy and merciful Inquisition;—you will not tell us what you know concerning the death of Father Olavida."—"I have told you that I believe he perished in consequence of his ignorance and presumption." "What proof can you produce of that?" —"He sought the knowledge of a secret withheld from man." "What was that?" —"The secret of discovering the presence or agency of the evil power." "Do you possess that secret?"—After much agitation on the part of the prisoner, he said distinctly, but very faintly, "My master forbids me to disclose it." "If your master were Jesus Christ, he would not forbid you to obey the commands, or answer the questions of the Inquisition."—"I am not sure of that." There was a general outcry of horror at these words. The examination then went on. "If you believed Olavida to be guilty of any pursuits or

studies condemned by our mother the church, why did you not denounce him to the Inquisition?"—"Because I believed him not likely to be injured by such pursuits; his mind was too weak,—he died in the struggle," said the prisoner with great emphasis. "You believe, then, it requires strength of mind to keep those abominable secrets, when examined as to their nature and tendency?"—"No, I rather imagine strength of body." "We shall try that presently," said an Inquisitor, giving a signal for the torture. * * * * * * * * * * * *

The prisoner underwent the first and second applications with unshrinking courage, but on the infliction of the water-torture, which is indeed insupportable to humanity, either to suffer or relate, he exclaimed in the gasping interval, he would disclose every thing. He was released, refreshed, restored, and the following day uttered the following remarkable confession

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The old Spanish woman further confessed to Stanton, that * * * * * * * * * * and that the Englishman certainly had been seen in the neighbourhood since;—seen, as she had heard, that very night. "Great G—d!" exclaimed Stanton, as he recollected the stranger whose demoniac laugh had so appalled him, while gazing on the lifeless bodies of the lovers, whom the lightning had struck and blasted.

As the manuscript, after a few blotted and illegible pages, became more distinct, Melmoth read on, perplexed and unsatisfied, not knowing what connexion this Spanish story could have with his ancestor, whom, however, he recognised under the title of *the Englishman;* and wondering how Stanton could have thought it

worth his while to follow him to Ireland, write a long manuscript about an event that occurred in Spain, and leave it in the hands of his family, to "verify untrue things," in the language of Dogberry,—his wonder was diminished, though his curiosity was still more inflamed, by the perusal of the next lines, which he made out with some difficulty. It seems Stanton was now in England. * * * * * * * * * * * * *

About the year 1677, Stanton was in London, his mind still full of his mysterious countryman. This constant subject of his contemplations had produced a visible change in his exterior,—his walk was what Sallust tells us of Catiline's,—his were, too, the "*fœdi oculi.*" He said to himself every moment, "If I could but trace that being, I will not call him man,"—and the next moment he said, "and what if I could?" In this state of mind, it is singular enough that he mixed constantly in public amusements, but it is

true. When one fierce passion is devouring the soul, we feel more than ever the necessity of external excitement; and our dependence on the world for temporary relief increases in direct proportion to our contempt of the world and all its works. He went frequently to the theatres, *then* fashionable, when

> "The fair sat panting at a courtier's play,
> And not a mask went unimproved away."

The London theatres then presented a spectacle which ought for ever to put to silence the foolish outcry against progressive deterioration of morals,—foolish even from the pen of Juvenal, and still more so from the lips of a modern Puritan. Vice is always nearly on an average: The only difference in life worth tracing, is that of manners, and there we have manifestly the advantage of our ancestors. Hypocrisy is said to be the homage that vice pays to virtue,—decorum is the outward expression of that homage;

and if this be so, we must acknowledge that vice has latterly grown very humble indeed. There was, however, something splendid, ostentatious, and obtrusive, in the vices of Charles the Second's reign.—A view of the theatres alone proved it, when Stanton was in the habit of visiting them. At the doors stood on one side the footmen of a fashionable nobleman, (with arms concealed under their liveries), surrounding the sedan of a popular actress *, whom they were to carry off *vi et armis*, as she entered it at the end of the play. At the other side waited the *glass coach* of a woman of fashion, who waited to take Kynaston (the Adonis of the day), in his female dress, to the park after the

* Mrs Marshall, the original Roxana in Lee's Alexander, and the only virtuous woman then on the stage. She was carried off in the manner described, by Lord Orrery, who, finding all his solicitations repelled, had recourse to a sham marriage performed by a servant in the habit of a clergyman.

play was over, and exhibit him in all the luxurious splendour of effeminate beauty, (heightened by theatrical dress), for which he was so distinguished.

Plays being then performed at four o'clock, allowed ample time for the evening drive, and the midnight assignation, when the parties met by torch-light, masked, in St James's park, and verified the title of Wycherly's play, "Love in a Wood." The boxes, as Stanton looked round him, were filled with females, whose naked shoulders and bosoms, well testified in the paintings of Lely, and the pages of Grammont, might save modern puritanism many a vituperative groan and affected reminiscence. They had all taken the precaution to send some male relative, on the first night of a new play, to report whether it was fit for persons of "honour and reputation" to appear at; but in spite of this precaution, at certain passages (which occurred about every second sentence) they were compelled to spread out their fans, or play with the

still cherished love-lock, which Prynne himself had not been able to write down.

The men in the boxes were composed of two distinct classes, the "men of wit and pleasure about town," distinguished by their Flanders lace cravats, soiled with snuff, their diamond rings, the pretended gift of a royal mistress, (*n'importe* whether the Duchess of Portsmouth or Nell Gwynne); their uncombed wigs, whose curls descended to their waists, and the loud and careless tone in which they abused Dryden, Lee, and Otway, and quoted Sedley and Rochester;—the other class were the lovers, the gentle "squires of dames," equally conspicuous for their white fringed gloves, their obsequious bows, and their commencing every sentence addressed to a lady, with the profane exclamation of * "Oh Jesu!" or the softer, but equally

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* Vide Pope, (copying from Doune).

"Peace, fools, or Gonson will for Papists seize you,
If once he catch you at your Jesu, Jesu."

unmeaning one of "I beseech you, Madam," or, "Madam, I burn *." One circumstance sufficiently extraordinary marked the manners of the day; females had not then found their proper level in life; they were alternately adored as goddesses, and assailed as prostitutes; and the man who, this moment, addressed his mistress in language borrowed from Orondates worshipping Cassandra, in the next accosted her with ribaldry that might put to the blush the piazzas of Covent Garden †.

The pit presented a more various spectacle. There were the critics armed cap-a-pee from Aristotle and Bossu; these men dined at twelve, dictated at a coffee-house till four,

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* Vide the Old Bachelor, whose Araminta, wearied by the repetition of these phrases, forbids her lover to address her in any sentence commencing with them.

† Vide any old play you may have the patience to peruse; or, *instar omnium*, read the courtly loves of Rodolphil and Melantha, Palamede and Doratice, in Dryden's Marriage a la Mode.

then called to the boy to brush their shoes, and strode to the theatre, where, till the curtain rose, they sat hushed in grim repose, and expecting their evening prey. There were the templars, spruce, pert, and loquacious; and here and there a sober citizen, doffing his steeple-crowned hat, and hiding his little band under the folds of his huge puritanic cloke, while his eyes, declined with an expression half leering, half ejaculatory, towards a masked female, muffled in a hood and scarf, testified what had seduced him into these "tents of Kedar." There were females, too, but all in vizard masks, which, though worn as well as aunt Dinah's in Tristram Shandy, served to conceal them from the "young bubbles" they were in quest of, and from all but the orange-women, who hailed them loudly as they passed the doors *. In the galleries were the happy souls who waited for

* Vide Southern's Oroonoko,—I mean the comic part.

the fulfilment of Dryden's promise in one of his prologues *; no matter to them whether it were the ghost of Almanzor's mother in her dripping shroud, or that of Laius, who, according to the stage directions, rises in his chariot, armed with the ghosts of his three murdered attendants behind him;—a joke that did not escape l'Abbe le Blanc †, in his recipe for writing an English tragedy. Some, indeed, from time to time called out for the "burning of the Pope;" but though

"Space was obedient to the boundless piece,
Which oped in Mexico and closed in Greece,"

it was not always possible to indulge them in this laudable amusement, as the scene of the popular plays was generally laid in Africa or Spain; Sir Robert Howard, Elkanah Settle, and John Dryden, all agreeing in their choice of Spanish and Moorish

* "A charm, a song, a murder, and a ghost."
Prologue to Œdipus.

† Vide Le Blanc's Letters.

subjects for their principal plays. Among this joyous groupe were seated several women of fashion masked, enjoying in secrecy the licentiousness which they dared not openly patronise, and verifying Gay's characteristic description, though it was written many years later,

"Mobbed in the gallery Laura sits secure,
And laughs at jests that turn the box demure."

Stanton gazed on all this with the look of one who "could not be moved to smile at any thing." He turned to the stage, the play was Alexander, then acted as written by Lee, and the principal character was performed by Hart, whose god-like ardour in making love, is said almost to have compelled the audience to believe that they beheld the "son of Ammon."

There were absurdities enough to offend a classical, or even a rational spectator. There were Grecian heroes with roses in their shoes, feathers in their hats, and wigs down to their waists; and Persian prin-

cesses in stiff stays and powdered hair. But the illusion of the scene was well sustained, for the heroines were rivals in real as well as theatrical life. It was that memorable night, when, according to the history of the veteran Betterton *, Mrs Barry, who personated Roxana, had a green-room squabble with Mrs Bowtell, the representative of Statira, about a veil, which the partiality of the property-man adjudged to the latter. Roxana suppressed her rage till the fifth act, when, stabbing Statira, she aimed the blow with such force as to pierce through her stays, and inflict a severe though not dangerous wound. Mrs Bowtell fainted, the performance was suspended, and, in the commotion which this incident caused in the house, many of the audience rose, and Stanton among them. It was at this moment that, in a seat opposite to him, he discovered the object of his search for four

* Vide Betterton's History of the Stage.

years,—the Englishman whom he had met in the plains of Valentia, and whom he believed the same with the subject of the extraordinary narrative he had heard there.

He was standing up. There was nothing particular or remarkable in his appearance, but the expression of his eyes could never be mistaken or forgotten. The heart of Stanton palpitated with violence,—a mist overspread his eyes,—a nameless and deadly sickness, accompanied with a creeping sensation in every pore, from which cold drops were gushing, announced the * * *

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Before he had well recovered, a strain of music, soft, solemn, and delicious, breathed round him, audibly ascending from the ground, and increasing in sweetness and power till it seemed to fill the whole building. Under the sudden impulse of amazement and pleasure, he inquired of some around him from whence those exquisite sounds arose. But, by the manner in

which he was answered, it was plain that those he addressed considered him insane; and, indeed, the remarkable change in his expression might well justify the suspicion. He then remembered that night in Spain, when the same sweet and mysterious sounds were heard only by the young bridegroom and bride, of whom the latter perished on that very night. "And am I then to be the next victim?" thought Stanton; "and are those celestial sounds, that seem to prepare us for heaven, only intended to announce the presence of an incarnate fiend, who mocks the devoted with 'airs from heaven,' while he prepares to surround them with 'blasts from hell'?" It is very singular that at this moment, when his imagination had reached its highest pitch of elevation,—when the object he had pursued so long and fruitlessly, had in one moment become as it were tangible to the grasp both of mind and body,—when this spirit, with whom he had wrestled in darkness, was at last about to

declare its name, that Stanton began to feel a kind of disappointment at the futility of his pursuits, like Bruce at discovering the source of the Nile, or Gibbon on concluding his History. The feeling which he had dwelt on so long, that he had actually converted it into a duty, was after all mere curiosity; but what passion is more insatiable, or more capable of giving a kind of romantic grandeur to all its wanderings and eccentricities? Curiosity is in one respect like love, it always compromises between the object and the feeling; and provided the latter possesses sufficient energy, no matter how contemptible the former may be. A child might have smiled at the agitation of Stanton, caused as it was by the accidental appearance of a stranger; but no man, in the full energy of his passions, was there, but must have trembled at the horrible agony of emotion with which he felt approaching, with sudden and irresistible velocity, the crisis of his destiny.

When the play was over, he stood for some moments in the deserted streets. It was a beautiful moonlight night, and he saw near him a figure, whose shadow, projected half across the street, (there were no flagged ways then, chains and posts were the only defence of the foot-passenger), appeared to him of gigantic magnitude. He had been so long accustomed to contend with these phantoms of the imagination, that he took a kind of stubborn delight in subduing them. He walked up to the object, and observing the shadow only was magnified, and the figure was the ordinary height of man, he approached it, and discovered the very object of his search,—the man whom he had seen for a moment in Valentia, and, after a search of four years, recognised at the theatre. * * * * *

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"You were in quest of me?"—"I was." "Have you any thing to inquire of me?"—"Much." "Speak, then."—

"This is no place." "No place! poor wretch, I am independent of time and place. Speak, if you have any thing to ask or to learn?"—"I have many things to ask, but nothing to learn, I hope, from you." "You deceive yourself, but you will be undeceived when next we meet." —"And when shall that be?" said Stanton, grasping his arm; "name your hour and your place." "The hour shall be mid-day," answered the stranger, with a horrid and unintelligible smile; "and the place shall be the bare walls of a mad-house, where you shall rise rattling in your chains, and rustling from your straw, to greet me,—yet still you shall have *the curse of sanity*, and of memory. My voice shall ring in your ears till then, and the glance of these eyes shall be reflected from every object, animate or inanimate, till you behold them again."—"Is it under circumstances so horrible we are to meet again?" said Stanton, shrinking under the

full-lighted blaze of those demon eyes. "I never," said the stranger, in an emphatic tone,—"I *never desert my friends in misfortune.* When they are plunged in the lowest abyss of human calamity, *they are sure to be visited by me.*" *

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The narrative, when Melmoth was again able to trace its continuation, described Stanton, some years after, plunged in a state the most deplorable.

He had been always reckoned of a singular turn of mind, and the belief of this, aggravated by his constant talk of Melmoth, his wild pursuit of him, his strange behaviour at the theatre, and his dwelling on the various particulars of their extraordinary meetings, with all the intensity of the deepest conviction, (while he never could impress them on any one's conviction but his own), suggested to some prudent people the idea that he was deranged. Their malignity probably took part with

their prudence. The selfish Frenchman * says, we feel a pleasure even in the misfortunes of our friends,—*a plus forte* in those of our enemies; and as every one is an enemy to a man of genius of course, the report of Stanton's malady was propagated with infernal and successful industry. Stanton's next relative, a needy unprincipled man, watched the report in its circulation, and saw the snares closing round his victim. He waited on him one morning, accompanied by a person of a grave, though somewhat repulsive appearance. Stanton was as usual abstracted and restless, and, after a few moments conversation, he proposed a drive a few miles out of London, which he said would revive and refresh him. Stanton objected, on account of the difficulty of getting a hackney coach, (for it is singular that at this period the number of private equipages, though infinitely fewer than they

* Rochefoucault.

are now, exceeded the number of hired ones), and proposed going by water. This, however, did not suit the kinsman's views; and, after pretending to send for a carriage, (which was in waiting at the end of the street), Stanton and his companions entered it, and drove about two miles out of London.

The carriage then stopped. "Come, Cousin," said the younger Stanton,—"come and view a purchase I have made." Stanton absently alighted, and followed him across a small paved court; the other person followed. "In troth, Cousin," said Stanton, "your choice appears not to have been discreetly made; your house has something of a gloomy aspect."—"Hold you content, Cousin," replied the other; "I shall take order that you like it better, when you have been some time a dweller therein." Some attendants of a mean appearance, and with most suspicious visages, awaited them on their entrance, and they ascended a narrow staircase, which led to

a room meanly furnished. "Wait here," said the kinsman, to the man who accompanied them, "till I go for company to divertise my cousin in his loneliness." They were left alone. Stanton took no notice of his companion, but as usual seized the first book near him, and began to read. It was a volume in manuscript,—they were then much more common than now.

The first lines struck him as indicating insanity in the writer. It was a wild proposal (written apparently after the great fire of London) to rebuild it with stone, and attempting to prove, on a calculation wild, false, and yet sometimes plausible, that this could be done out of the colossal fragments of Stonehenge, which the writer proposed to remove for that purpose. Subjoined were several grotesque drawings of engines designed to remove those massive blocks, and in a corner of the page was a note,—"I would have drawn these more accurately, but was not allowed *a knife* to mend my pen."

The next was entitled, " A modest proposal for the spreading of Christianity in foreign parts, whereby it is hoped its entertainment will become general all over the world."—This modest proposal was, to convert the Turkish ambassadors, (who had been in London a few years before), by offering them their choice of being strangled on the spot, or becoming Christians. Of course the writer reckoned on their embracing the easier alternative, but even this was to be clogged with a heavy condition,—namely, that they must be bound before a magistrate to convert twenty mussulmans a day, on their return to Turkey. The rest of the pamphlet was reasoned very much in the conclusive style of Captain Bobadil,—these twenty will convert twenty more a piece, and these two hundred converts, converting their due number in the same time, all Turkey would be converted before the Grand Signior knew where he was. Then comes the *coup d'eclat*,—one fine morn-

ing, every minaret in Constantinople was to ring out with bells, instead of the cry of the Muezzins; and the Imaum, coming out to see what was the matter, was to be encountered by the Archbishop of Canterbury, *in pontificalibus*, performing Cathedral service in the church of St Sophia, which was to finish the business. Here an objection appeared to arise, which the ingenuity of the writer had anticipated.—"It may be redargued," saith he, "by those who have more spleen than brain, that forasmuch as the Archbishop preacheth in English, he will not thereby much edify the Turkish folk, who do altogether hold in a vain gabble of their own." But this (to use his own language) he "evites," by judiciously observing, that where service was performed in an unknown tongue, the devotion of the people was always observed to be much increased thereby; as, for instance, in the church of Rome,—that St Augustine, with his monks, advanced to meet King Ethelbert

singing litanies, (in a language his majesty could not possibly have understood), and converted him and his whole court on the spot;—that the sybilline books *

* * * * * * *

Cum multis aliis.

Between the pages were cut most exquisitely in paper the liknesses of some of these Turkish ambassadors; the hair of the beards, in particular, was feathered with a delicacy of touch that seemed the work of fairy fingers,—but the pages ended with a complaint of the operator, that his *scissars had been taken from him.* However, he consoled himself and the reader with the assurance, that he would that night catch a moon-beam as it entered through the grating, and, when he had whetted it on the iron knobs of his door, would do wonders with it. In the next page was found a melancholy proof of powerful but prostrated intellect. It contained some insane lines, ascribed to Lee the dramatic poet, commencing,

"O that my lungs could bleat like buttered pease," &c.

There is no proof whatever that these miserable lines were really written by Lee, except that the measure is the fashionable quatrain of the period. It is singular that Stanton read on without suspicion of his own danger, quite absorbed in *the album of a mad-house*, without ever reflecting on the place where he was, and which such compositions too manifestly designated.

It was after a long interval that he looked round, and perceived that his companion was gone. Bells were unusual then. He proceeded to the door,—it was fastened. He called aloud,—his voice was echoed in a moment by many others, but in tones so wild and discordant, that he desisted in involuntary terror. As the day advanced, and no one approached, he tried the window, and then perceived for the first time it was grated. It looked out on the narrow flagged yard, in which no human being was; and if there had, from

such a being no human feeling could have been extracted.

Sickening with unspeakable horror, he sunk rather than sat down beside the miserable window, and " wished for day."

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At midnight he started from a doze, half a swoon, half a sleep, which probably the hardness of his seat, and of the deal table on which he leaned, had not contributed to prolong.

He was in complete darkness; the horror of his situation struck him at once, and for a moment he was indeed almost qualified for an inmate of that dreadful mansion. He felt his way to the door, shook it with desperate strength, and uttered the most frightful cries, mixed with expostulations and commands. His cries were in a moment echoed by a hundred voices. In maniacs there is a peculiar malignity, accompanied by an extraordinary acuteness of some of the senses, particularly in distinguishing the voice of a

stranger. The cries that he heard on every side seemed like a wild and infernal yell of joy, that their mansion of misery had obtained another tenant.

He paused, exhausted,—a quick and thundering step was heard in the passage. The door was opened, and a man of savage appearance stood at the entrance,—two more were seen indistinctly in the passage. —"Release me, villain!" "Stop, my fine fellow, what's all this noise for?" "Where am I?" "Where you ought to be." "Will you dare to detain me?" "Yes, and a little more than that," answered the ruffian, applying a loaded horse-whip to his back and shoulders, till the patient soon fell to the ground convulsed with rage and pain. "Now you see you are where you ought to be," repeated the ruffian, brandishing the horse-whip over him, "and now take the advice of a friend, and make no more noise. The lads are ready for you with the darbies, and they'll clink them on in the crack of this whip,

unless you prefer another touch of it first." They then were advancing into the room as he spoke, with fetters in their hands, (strait waistcoats being then little known or used), and shewed, by their frightful countenances and gestures, no unwillingness to apply them. Their harsh rattle on the stone pavement made Stanton's blood run cold; the effect, however, was useful. He had the presence of mind to acknowledge his (supposed) miserable condition, to supplicate the forbearance of the ruthless keeper, and promise complete submission to his orders. This pacified the ruffian, and he retired.

Stanton collected all his resolution to encounter the horrible night; he saw all that was before him, and summoned himself to meet it. After much agitated deliberation, he conceived it best to continue the same appearance of submission and tranquillity, hoping that thus he might in time either propitiate the wretches in whose hands he was, or, by his apparent

inoffensiveness, procure such opportunities of indulgence, as might perhaps ultimately facilitate his escape. He therefore determined to conduct himself with the utmost tranquillity, and never to let his voice be heard in the house; and he laid down several other resolutions with a degree of prudence which he already shuddered to think might be the cunning of incipient madness, or the beginning result of the horrid habits of the place.

These resolutions were put to desperate trial that very night. Just next to Stanton's apartment were lodged two most uncongenial neighbours. One of them was a puritanical weaver, who had been driven mad by a single sermon from the celebrated Hugh Peters, and was sent to the mad-house as full of election and reprobation as he could hold,—and fuller. He regularly repeated over the *five points* while day-light lasted, and imagined himself preaching in a conventicle with distinguished success; towards twilight his

visions were more gloomy, and at midnight his blasphemies became horrible. In the opposite cell was lodged a loyalist tailor, who had been ruined by giving credit to the cavaliers and their ladies,—(for at this time, and much later, down to the reign of Anne, tailors were employed by females even *to make* and *fit on their stays*),—who had run mad with drink and loyalty on the burning of the Rump, and ever since had made the cells of the madhouse echo with fragments of the ill-fated Colonel Lovelace's songs, scraps from Cowley's "Cutter of Coleman street," and some curious specimens from Mrs Aphra Beha's plays, where the cavaliers are denominated the *heroicks*, and Lady Lambert and Lady Desborough represented as going to meeting, their large Bibles carried before them by their pages, and falling in love with two banished cavaliers by the way.—"Tabitha, Tabitha," cried a voice half in exultation and half in derision; "thou shalt go with thy hair curled, and

thy breasts naked;"—and then added in an affected voice,—" I could dance the Canaries once, spouse." This never failed to rouse the feelings, or rather operate on the instincts of the puritanic weaver, who immediately answered, " Colonel Harrison shall come out of the west, riding on a sky-coloured mule, which signifies instruction *." " Ye lie, ye round head son of a b——h," roared the cavalier tailor, " Colonel Harrison will be damned before he ever mounts a sky-coloured mule;" and he concluded this pithy sentence with fragments of anti-Oliverian songs.

" And may I live to see
Old Noll upon a tree,
And many such as he;
Confound him, confound him,
Diseases all around him."

" Ye are honest gentlemen, I can play many tunes," squeaked a poor mad loyalist

* Vide Cutter of Coleman street.

fiddler, who had been accustomed to play in the taverns to the cavalier party, and just remembered the words of a similar minstrel playing for Colonel Blunt in the committee. "Then play me the air to "Rebellion is breaking up house," exclaimed the tailor, dancing wildly about his cell (as far as his chains allowed him) to an imaginary measure. The weaver could contain no longer. "How long, Lord, how long," he exclaimed, "shall thine enemies insult thy sanctuary, in which I have been placed an anointed teacher? even here, where I am placed to preach to the souls in prison?—Open the flood-gates of thy power, and though thy waves and storms go over me, let me testify in the midst of them, even as he who spreadeth forth his hands to swim may raise one of them to warn his companion that he is about to sink.—Sister Ruth, why dost thou uncover thy bosom to discover my frailty?—Lord, let thine arm of power be with us as it was when thou

brakest the shield, the sword, and the battle,—when thy foot was dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs was red through the same.—Dip all thy garments in blood, and let me weave thee fresh when thou art stained.—When shall thy saints tread the wine-press of thy wrath? Blood! blood! the saints call for it, earth gapes to swallow it, hell thirsts for it!—Sister Ruth, I pray thee, conceal thy bosom, and be not as the vain women of this generation.—Oh for a day like that, a day of the Lord of hosts, when the towers fell!—Spare me in the battle, for I am not a mighty man of war; leave me in the rear of the host, to curse, with the curse of Meroz, those who come not to the help of the Lord against the mighty,—even to curse this malignant tailor,—yea, curse him bitterly.—Lord, I am in the tents of Kedar, my feet stumble on the dark mountains,—I fall,—I fall!"—And the poor wretch, exhausted by his delirious agonies, fell, and grovelled for

some time in his straw. "Oh! I have had a grievous fall,—Sister Ruth,—Oh Sister Ruth!—Rejoice not against me, Oh mine enemy! though I fall, I shall rise again." Whatever satisfaction Sister Ruth might have derived from this assurance, if she could have heard it, was enjoyed tenfold by the weaver, whose amorous reminiscences were in a moment exchanged for warlike ones, borrowed from a wretched and disarranged mass of intellectual rubbish. "The Lord is a man of war," he shouted. —"Look to Marston Moor!—Look to the city, the proud city, full of pride and sin! —Look to the waves of the Severn, as red with blood as the waves of the Red Sea!—There were the hoofs broken by means of the prancings, the prancings of the mighty ones.—Then, Lord, was thy triumph, and the triumph of thy saints, to bind their kings in chains, and their nobles in links of iron." The malignant tailor burst out in his turn: "Thank the

false Scots, and their solemn league and covenant, and Carisbrook Castle, for that, ye crop-eared Puritan," he yelled. "If it had not been for them, I would have taken measure of the king for a velvet cloak as high as the Tower of London, and one flirt of its folds would have knocked the "copper nose" into the Thames, and sent it a-drift to Hell." "Ye lie, in your teeth," echoed the weaver; "and I will prove it unarmed, with my shuttle against your needle, and smite you to the earth thereafter, as David smote Goliah. It was *the man's* (such was the indecent language in which Charles the First was spoken of by the Puritans)—it was the man's carnal, self-seeking, world-loving, prelatical hierarchy, that drove the godly to seek the sweet word in season from their own pastors, who righteously abominated the Popish garniture of lawn-sleeves, lewd organs, and steeple houses. Sister Ruth, tempt me not with that calf's head, it is

all streaming with blood;—drop it, I beseech thee, sister, it is unmeet in a woman's hand, though the brethren drink of it.—Woe be unto thee, gainsayer, dost thou not see how flames envelope the accursed city under his Arminian and Popish son?—London is on fire!—on fire!" he yelled; "and the brands are lit by the half-papist, whole-arminian, all-damned people thereof.—Fire!—fire!" The voice in which he shrieked out the last words was powerfully horrible, but it was like the moan of an infant, compared to the voice which took up and re-echoed the cry, in a tone that made the building shake. It was the voice of a maniac, who had lost her husband, children, subsistence, and finally her reason, in the dreadful fire of London. The cry of fire never failed to operate with terrible punctuality on her associations. She had been in a disturbed sleep, and now started from it as suddenly as on that dreadful night. It was Satur-

day night, too, and she was always observed to be particularly violent on that night,—it was the terrible weekly festival of insanity with her. She was awake, and busy in a moment escaping from the flames; and she dramatized the whole scene with such hideous fidelity, that Stanton's resolution was far more in danger from her than from the battle between his neighbours *Testimony* and *Hothead*. She began exclaiming she was suffocated by the smoke; then she sprung from her bed, calling for a light, and appeared to be struck by the sudden glare that burst through her casement.—"The last day," she shrieked, "The last day! The very heavens are on fire!"—"That will not come till the Man of Sin be first destroyed," cried the weaver; "thou ravest of light and fire, and yet thou art in utter darkness.—I pity thee, poor mad soul, I pity thee!" The maniac never heeded him; she appeared to be scrambling up a stair-case to

her children's room. She exclaimed she was scorched, singed, suffocated; her courage appeared to fail, and she retreated. "But my children are there!" she cried in a voice of unspeakable agony, as she seemed to make another effort; "here I am—here I am come to save you.—Oh God! They are all blazing!—Take this arm—no, not that, it is scorched and disabled—well, any arm—take hold of my clothes—no, they are blazing too!—Well, take me all on fire as I am!—And their hair, how it hisses!—Water, one drop of water for my youngest—he is but an infant—for my youngest, and let me burn!" She paused in horrid silence, to watch the fall of a blazing rafter that was about to shatter the stair-case on which she stood. —"The roof has fallen on my head!" she exclaimed. "The earth is weak, and all the inhabitants thereof," chaunted the weaver; "I bear up the pillars of it."

The maniac marked the destruction of

the spot where she thought she stood by one desperate bound, accompanied by a wild shriek, and then calmly gazed on her infants as they rolled over the scorching fragments, and sunk into the abyss of fire below. " There they go,—one—two—three—all !" and her voice sunk into low mutterings, and her convulsions into faint, cold shudderings, like the sobbings of a spent storm, as she imagined herself to " stand in safety and despair," amid the thousand houseless wretches assembled in the suburbs of London on the dreadful nights after the fire, without food, roof, or raiment, all gazing on the burning ruins of their dwellings and their property. She seemed to listen to their complaints, and even repeated some of them very affectingly, but invariably answered them with the same words, " But I have lost all my children—*all !*" It was remarkable, that when this sufferer began to rave, all the others became silent. The

cry of nature hushed every other cry,—she was the only patient in the house who was not mad from politics, religion, ebriety, or some perverted passion; and terrifying as the out-break of her frenzy always was, Stanton used to await it as a kind of relief from the dissonant, melancholy, and ludicrous ravings of the others.

But the utmost efforts of his resolution began to sink under the continued horrors of the place. The impression on his senses began to defy the power of reason to resist them. He could not shut out these frightful cries nightly repeated, nor the frightful sound of the whip employed to still them. Hope began to fail him, as he observed, that the submissive tranquillity (which he had imagined, by obtaining increased indulgence, might contribute to his escape, or perhaps convince the keeper of his sanity) was interpreted by the callous ruffian, who was acquainted only with the varieties of *madness*, as a more refined

species of that cunning which he was well accustomed to watch and baffle.

On his first discovery of his situation, he had determined to take the utmost care of his health and intellect that the place allowed, as the sole basis of his hope of deliverance. But as that hope declined, he neglected the means of realizing it. He had at first risen early, walked incessantly about his cell, and availed himself of every opportunity of being in the open air. He took the strictest care of his person in point of cleanliness, and with or without appetite, regularly forced down his miserable meals; and all these efforts were even pleasant, as long as hope prompted them. But now he began to relax them all. He passed half the day in his wretched bed, in which he frequently took his meals, declined shaving or changing his linen, and, when the sun shone into his cell, turned from it on his straw with a sigh of heart-broken despon-

dency. Formerly, when the air breathed through his grating, he used to say, "Blessed air of heaven, I shall breathe you once more in freedom!—Reserve all your freshness for that delicious evening when I shall inhale you, and be as free as you myself." Now when he felt it, he sighed and said nothing. The twitter of the sparrows, the pattering of rain, or the moan of the wind, sounds that he used to sit up in his bed to catch with delight, as reminding him of nature, were now unheeded.

He began at times to listen with sullen and horrible pleasure to the cries of his miserable companions. He became squalid, listless, torpid, and disgusting in his appearance. * * *

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It was one of those dismal nights, that, as he tossed on his loathsome bed,—more loathsome from the impossibility to quit it without feeling more "unrest,"—he perceived the miserable light that burned in

the hearth was obscured by the intervention of some dark object. He turned feebly towards the light, without curiosity, without excitement, but with a wish to diversify the monotony of his misery, by observing the slightest change made even accidentally in the dusky atmosphere of his cell. Between him and the light stood the figure of Melmoth, just as he had seen him from the first; the figure was the same; the expression of the face was the same,—cold, stony, and rigid; the eyes, with their infernal and dazzling lustre, were still the same.

Stanton's ruling passion rushed on his soul; he felt this apparition like a summons to a high and fearful encounter. He heard his heart beat audibly, and could have exclaimed with Lee's unfortunate heroine,—"It pants as cowards do before a battle; Oh the great march has sounded!"

Melmoth approached him with that frightful calmness that mocks the terror

it excites. " My prophecy has been fulfilled;—you rise to meet me rattling from your chains, and rustling from your straw —am I not a true prophet?" Stanton was silent. " Is not your situation very miserable?"—Still Stanton was silent; for he was beginning to believe this an illusion of madness. He thought to himself, " How could he have gained entrance here?"—" Would you not wish to be delivered from it?" Stanton tossed on his straw, and its rustling seemed to answer the question. " I have the power to deliver you from it." Melmoth spoke very slowly and very softly, and the melodious smoothness of his voice made a frightful contrast to the stony rigour of his features, and the fiend-like brilliancy of his eyes. " Who are you, and whence come you?" said Stanton, in a tone that was meant to be interrogatory and imperative, but which, from his habits of squalid debility, was at once feeble and querulous. His intellects had become affected by the gloom of his miserable habitation, as the

wretched inmate of a similar mansion, when produced before a medical examiner, was reported to be a complete Albinos.—"His skin was bleached, his eyes turned white; he could not bear the light; and, when exposed to it, he turned away with a mixture of weakness and restlessness, more like the writhings of a sick infant than the struggles of a man."

Such was Stanton's situation; he was enfeebled now, and the power of the enemy seemed without a possibility of opposition from either his intellectual or corporeal powers. * * *

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Of all their horrible dialogue, only these words were legible in the manuscript, "You know me now."—"I always knew you."—"That is false; you imagined you did, and that has been the cause of all the wild * * * *

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of the * * *

* * of your finally being lodged in this mansion of misery, where only I

would seek, where only I can succour you." "You, demon!"—"Demon!—Harsh words!—Was it a demon or a human being placed you here?—Listen to me, Stanton; nay, wrap not yourself in that miserable blanket,—that cannot shut out my words. Believe me, were you folded in thunder-clouds, you must hear *me!* Stanton, think of your misery. These bare walls—what do they present to the intellect or to the senses?—White-wash, diversified with the scrawls of charcoal or red chalk, that your happy predecessors have left for you to trace over. You have a taste for drawing,—I trust it will improve. And here's a grating, through which the sun squints on you like a step-dame, and the breeze blows, as if it meant to tantalize you with a sigh from that sweet mouth, whose kiss you must never enjoy. And where's your library,—intellectual man,—travelled man?" he repeated in a tone of bitter derision; "where be your companions, your peaked men of

countries, as your favourite Shakespeare has it? You must be content with the spider and the rat, to crawl and scratch round your flock-bed! I have known prisoners in the Bastile to feed them for companions,—why don't you begin your task? I have known a spider to descend at the tap of a finger, and a rat to come forth when the daily meal was brought, to share it with his fellow-prisoner!—How delightful to have vermin for your guests! Aye, and when the feast fails them, they make a meal of their entertainer!—You shudder —Are you, then, the first prisoner who has been devoured alive by the vermin that infested his cell?—Delightful banquet, not "where you eat, but where you are eaten!" Your guests, however, will give you one token of repentance while they feed; there will be *gnashing of teeth*, and you shall hear it, and feel it too perchance!——And then for meals—Oh you are daintily off!—The soup that the cat has lapped; and (as her

progeny has probably contributed to the hell-broth) why not?—— Then your hours of solitude, deliciously diversified by the yell of famine, the howl of madness, the crash of whips, and the broken-hearted sob of those who, like you, are supposed, or *driven* mad by the crimes of others!—Stanton, do you imagine your reason can possibly hold out amid such scenes?—Supposing your reason was unimpaired, your health not destroyed,—suppose all this, which is, after all, more than fair supposition can grant, guess the effect of the continuance of these scenes on your senses alone. A time will come, and soon, when, from mere habit, you will echo the scream of every delirious wretch that harbours near you; then you will pause, clasp your hands on your throbbing head, and listen with horrible anxiety whether the scream proceeded from *you* or *them*. The time will come, when, from the want of occupation, the listless and horrible vacancy of your hours, you will

feel as anxious to hear those shrieks, as you were at first terrified to hear them,—when you will watch for the ravings of your next neighbour, as you would for a scene on the stage. All humanity will be extinguished in you. The ravings of these wretches will become at once your sport and your torture. You will watch for the sounds, to mock them with the grimaces and bellowings of a fiend. The mind has a power of accommodating itself to its situation, that you will experience in its most frightful and deplorable efficacy. Then comes the dreadful doubt of one's own sanity, the terrible announcer that *that* doubt will soon become fear, and *that* fear certainty. Perhaps (still more dreadful) the *fear* will at last become a *hope*,—shut out from society, watched by a brutal keeper, writhing with all the impotent agony of an incarcerated mind, without communication and without sympathy, unable to exchange ideas but with those whose ideas are only the hideous spectres

of departed intellect, or even to hear the welcome sound of the human voice, except to mistake it for the howl of a fiend, and stop the ear desecrated by its intrusion,—then at last your fear will become a more fearful hope; you will wish to become one of them, to escape the agony of consciousness. As those who have long leaned over a precipice, have at last felt a desire to plunge below, to relieve the intolerable temptation of their giddiness*, you will hear them laugh amid their wildest paroxysms; you will say, 'Doubtless those wretches have some consolation, but I have none; my sanity is my greatest curse in this abode of horrors. They greedily devour their miserable meals, while I loathe mine. They sleep sometimes soundly, while my sleep is—worse than their wak-

* A fact, related to me by a person who was near committing suicide in a similar situation, to escape what he called "the excruciating torture of giddiness."

ing. They are revived every morning by some delicious illusion of cunning madness, soothing them with the hope of escaping, baffling or tormenting their keeper; my sanity precludes all such hope. *I know I never can escape*, and the preservation of my faculties is only an aggravation of my sufferings. I have all their miseries,—I have none of their consolations. They laugh,—I hear them; would I could laugh like them.' You will try, and the very effort will be an invocation to the demon of insanity to come and take full possession of you from that moment for ever.

(There were other details, both of the menaces and temptations employed by Melmoth, which are too horrible for insertion. One of them may serve for an instance).

"You think that the intellectual power is something distinct from the vitality of the soul, or, in other words, that if even your reason should be destroyed, (which it

nearly is), your soul might yet enjoy beatitude in the full exercise of its enlarged and exalted faculties, and all the clouds which obscured them be dispelled by the Sun of Righteousness, in whose beams you hope to bask for ever and ever. Now, without going into any metaphysical subtleties about the distinction between mind and soul, experience must teach you, that there can be no crime into which madmen would not, and do not precipitate themselves; mischief is their occupation, malice their habit, murder their sport, and blasphemy their delight. Whether a soul in this state can be in a hopeful one, it is for you to judge; but it seems to me, that with the loss of reason, (and reason cannot long be retained in this place), you lose also the hope of immortality.—Listen," said the tempter, pausing, " listen to the wretch who is raving near you, and whose blasphemies might make a demon start. —He was once an eminent puritanical preacher. Half the day he imagines him-

self in a pulpit, denouncing damnation against Papists, Arminians, and even Sub-lapsarians, (he being a Supra-lapsarian himself). He foams, he writhes, he gnashes his teeth; you would imagine him in the hell he was painting, and that the fire and brimstone he is so lavish of, were actually exhaling from his jaws. At night his *creed retaliates on him;* he believes himself one of the reprobates he has been all day denouncing, and curses God for the very decree he has all day been glorifying Him for.

He, whom he has for twelve hours been vociferating "is the loveliest among ten thousand," becomes the object of demoniac hostility and execration. He grapples with the iron posts of his bed, and says he is rooting out the cross from the very foundations of Calvary; and it is remarkable, that in proportion as his morning exercises are intense, vivid, and eloquent, his nightly blasphemies are outrageous and horrible.—Hark! Now he believes himself

a demon; listen to his diabolical eloquence of horror!"

Stanton listened, and shuddered *

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"Escape—escape for your life," cried the tempter; "break forth into life, liberty, and sanity. Your social happiness, your intellectual powers, your immortal interests, perhaps, depend on the choice of this moment.—There is the door, and the key is my hand. Choose—choose!"—"And how comes the key in your hand? and what is the condition of my liberation?" said Stanton. * * *

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The explanation occupied several pages, which, to the torture of young Melmoth, were wholly illegible. It seemed, however, to have been rejected by Stanton with the utmost rage and horror, for Melmoth at last made out,—"Begone, monster, demon!——begone to your native place. Even this mansion of horror trembles to contain you; its walls sweat,

and its floors quiver, while you tread them." * * * *

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The conclusion of this extraordinary manuscript was in such a state, that, in fifteen mouldy and crumbling pages, Melmoth could hardly make out that number of lines. No antiquarian, unfolding with trembling hand the calcined leaves of an Herculaneum manuscript, and hoping to discover some lost lines of the Æneis in Virgil's own autograph, or at least some unutterable abomination of Petronius or Martial, happily elucidatory of the mysteries of the Spintriæ, or the orgies of the Phallic worshippers, ever pored with more luckless diligence, or shook a head of more hopeless despondency over his task. He could but just make out what tended rather to excite than assuage that feverish thirst of curiosity which was consuming his inmost soul. The manuscript told no more of Melmoth, but mentioned that Stanton was finally liberated from his

confinement,—that his pursuit of Melmoth was incessant and indefatigable,—that he himself allowed it to be a species of insanity,—that while he acknowledged it to be the master-passion, he also felt it the master-torment of his life. He again visited the Continent, returned to England,—pursued, inquired, traced, bribed, but in vain. The being whom he had met thrice, under circumstances so extraordinary, he was fated never to encounter again *in his life-time.* At length, discovering that he had been born in Ireland, he resolved to go there,—went, and found his pursuit again fruitless, and his inquiries unanswered. The family knew nothing of him, or at least what they knew or imagined, they prudently refused to disclose to a stranger, and Stanton departed unsatisfied. It is remarkable, that he too, as appeared from many half-obliterated pages of the manuscript, never disclosed to mortal the particulars of their conversation in the mad-house; and the slightest allusion

to it threw him into fits of rage and gloom equally singular and alarming. He left the manuscript, however, in the hands of the family, possibly deeming, from their incuriosity, their apparent indifference to their relative, or their obvious inacquaintance with reading of any kind, manuscript or books, his deposit would be safe. He seems, in fact, to have acted like men, who, in distress at sea, intrust their letters and dispatches to a bottle sealed, and commit it to the waves. The last lines of the manuscript that were legible, were sufficiently extraordinary. * * * * * *

"I have sought him every where.—The desire of meeting him once more, is become as a burning fire within me,—it is the necessary condition of my existence. I have vainly sought him at last in Ireland, of which I find he is a native.—Perhaps our final meeting will be in * * * * * *

Such was the conclusion of the manu-

script which Melmoth found in his uncle's closet. When he had finished it, he sunk down on the table near which he had been reading it, his face hid in his folded arms, his senses reeling, his mind in a mingled state of stupor and excitement. After a few moments, he raised himself with an involuntary start, and saw the picture gazing at him from its canvas. He was within ten inches of it as he sat, and the proximity appeared increased by the strong light that was accidentally thrown on it, and its being the only representation of a human figure in the room. Melmoth felt for a moment as if he were about to receive an explanation from its lips.

He gazed on it in return,—all was silent in the house,—they were alone together. The illusion subsided at length; and as the mind rapidly passes to opposite extremes, he remembered the injunction of his uncle to destroy the portrait. He seized it;—his hand shook at first, but the mouldering canvas appeared to as-

sist him in the effort. He tore it from the frame with a cry half terrific, half triumphant;—it fell at his feet, and he shuddered as it fell. He expected to hear some fearful sounds, some unimaginable breathings of prophetic horror, follow this act of sacrilege, for such he felt it, to tear the portrait of his ancestor from his native walls. He paused and listened:—"There was no voice, nor any that answered;"—but as the wrinkled and torn canvas fell to the floor, its undulations gave the portrait the appearance of smiling. Melmoth felt horror indescribable at this transient and imaginary resuscitation of the figure. He caught it up, rushed into the next room, tore, cut, and hacked it in every direction, and eagerly watched the fragments that burned like tinder in the turf-fire which had been lit in his room. As Melmoth saw the last blaze, he threw himself into bed, in hope of a deep and intense sleep. He had done what was required of him, and felt exhausted both in mind and body;

but his slumber was not so sound as he had hoped for. The sullen light of the turf-fire, burning but never blazing, disturbed him every moment. He turned and turned, but still there was the same red light glaring on, but not illuminating, the dusky furniture of the apartment. The wind was high that night, and as the creaking door swung on its hinges, every noise seemed like the sound of a hand struggling with the lock, or of a foot pausing on the threshold. But (for Melmoth never could decide) was it in a dream or not, that he saw the figure of his ancestor appear at the door?—hesitatingly as he saw him at first on the night of his uncle's death,—saw him enter the room, approach his bed, and heard him whisper, "You have burned me, then; but those are flames I can survive.—I am alive,—I am beside you." Melmoth started, sprung from his bed,—it was broad day-light. He looked round,—there was no human being in the room but himself.

He felt a slight pain in the wrist of his right arm. He looked at it, it was black and blue, as from the recent gripe of a strong hand.

CHAPTER IV.

Haste with your weapons, cut the shrouds and stay,
And hew at once the mizen-mast away.

FALCONER.

THE following evening Melmoth retired early. The restlessness of the preceding night inclined him to repose, and the gloom of the day left him nothing to wish for but its speedy conclusion. It was now the latter end of Autumn; heavy clouds had all day been passing laggingly and gloomily along the atmosphere, as the hours of such a day pass over the human

mind and life. Not a drop of rain fell; the clouds went portentously off, like ships of war after reconnoitering a strong fort, to return with added strength and fury. The threat was soon fulfilled; the evening came on, prematurely darkened by clouds that seemed surcharged with a deluge. Loud and sudden squalls of wind shook the house from time to time, and then as suddenly ceased. Towards night the storm came on in all its strength; Melmoth's bed was shaken so as to render it impossible to sleep. He "liked the rocking of the battlements," but by no means liked the expected fall of the chimneys, the crashing in of the roof, and the splinters of the broken windows that were already scattered about his room. He rose and went down to the kitchen, where he knew a fire was burning, and there the terrified servants were all assembled, all agreeing, as the blast came roaring down the chimney, they never had witnessed such a storm, and between the gusts,

breathing shuddering prayers for those who were "out at sea that night." The vicinity of Melmoth's house to what seamen call an iron-bound coast, gave a dreadful sincerity to their prayers and their fears.

In a short time, however, Melmoth perceived that their minds were occupied with terrors beside those of the storm. The recent death of his uncle, and the supposed visit of that extraordinary being in whose existence they all firmly believed, were connected in their minds inseparably with the causes or consequences of this tempest, and they whispered their fearful suggestions to each other, till the sound reached Melmoth's ears at every step that he measured across the broken floor of the kitchen. Terror is very fond of associations; we love to connect the agitation of the elements with the agitated life of man; and never did a blast roar, or a gleam of lightning flash, that was not connected in the imagination of some one,

with a calamity that was to oe dreaded, deprecated, or endured,—with the fate of the living, or the destination of the dead. The tremendous storm that shook all England on the night of Cromwell's death, gave the hint to his puritanic chaplains to declare, that the Lord had caught him up in the whirlwind and chariot of fire, even thereafter, as he caught the prophet Elijah; while all the cavalier party, putting their own construction on the matter, proclaimed their confidence, that the Prince of the power of the air was vindicating his right, and carrying off the body of his victim (whose soul had long been his purchase) in a tempest, whose wild howl and triumphant ravage might have been variously, and with equal justice, interpreted by each party as giving testimony to their mutual denunciations. Just such a party *(mutatis mutandis)* were collected round the bickering fire and rocking chimney in Melmoth's kitchen. "He is going in that blast," said one of the hags, taking

the pipe from her mouth, and trying vainly to rekindle it among the embers that the storm scattered about like dust; "he is going in that blast."—"He'll come again," cried another Sybil, "he'll come again,—he's not at rest!—He roams and wails about till something is told that he never could tell in his life-time.—G–d save us!" she added, howling up the chimney, as if addressing the troubled spirit; "tell us what you want, and *stop the blast*, will ye?"—The wind came like thunder down the chimney; the hag shuddered and retreated. "If it's this you want—and this—and this," cried a young female whom Melmoth had not noticed before, "take them;" and she eagerly tore the papers out of her hair, and flung them into the fire. Then Melmoth recollected a ridiculous story told him the day before of this girl, who had had the "bad luck," as she called it, to curl her hair with some of the old and useless law-papers of the family, and who now imagined that they

" who kept this dreadful pudder o'er her head," were particularly provoked by her still retaining about her whatever belonged to the deceased; and as she flung the fragments of paper into the fire, she cried aloud, " There stop for the holy J——s' sake, and let us have no more about it!—You have what you wanted, and will you have done?" The laugh that Melmoth could hardly resist, was checked by a sound which he heard distinctly amid the storm. " Hush—silence! that was a signal gun! —there is a vessel in distress." They all paused and listened. We have already mentioned the closeness of Melmoth's abode to the sea-shore. This had well accustomed its inmates to all the terrors of shipwrecked vessels and drowning passengers. To their honour be it spoken, they never heard those sounds but as a claim, a piteous, irresistible claim on their humanity. They knew nothing of the barbarous practice on the English coast, of fastening a lanthorn to the limbs of a span-

selled horse, whose plungings were to misdirect the wrecked and sinking wretches, in the vain hope that the light they saw was a beacon, and thus to double the horrors of death by the baffled expectation of relief.

The party in the kitchen all watched Melmoth's countenance intently, as if its expression could have told them "the secrets of the hoary deep." The storm ceased for a moment, and there was a deep and dreary silence of fearful expectation. The sound was heard again,—it could not be mistaken. "It is a gun," cried Melmoth; "there is a vessel in distress!" and he hurried out of the kitchen, calling on the men to follow him.

The men partook eagerly of the excitement of enterprise and danger. A storm without doors is, after all, better than a storm within; without we have something to struggle with, within we have only to suffer; and the severest storm, by exciting the energy of its victim, gives at once a

stimulus to action, and a solace to pride, which those must want who sit shuddering between rocking walls, and almost driven to wish they had only to suffer, not to fear.

While the men were in search of a hundred coats, boots, and hats of their old master, to be sought for in every part of the house,—while one was dragging a great coat from the window, before which it had long hung as a blind, in total default of glass or shutters,—another was snatching a wig from the jack, where it had been suspended for a duster,—and a third was battling with a cat and her brood of kittens for a pair of old boots which she had been pleased to make the seat of her accouchement,—Melmoth had gone up to the highest room in the house. The window was driven in;—had there been light, this window commanded a view of the sea and the coast. He leaned far out of it, and listened with fearful and breathless anxiety. The night was dark, but far off, his sight,

sharpened by intense solicitude, descried a light at sea. The gust drove him from the window for a moment; at returning the next, he saw a faint flash, and then the report of a gun followed.

There needed no more; and in a few moments after, Melmoth was on the shore. Their way was short, and they walked with their utmost speed; but the violence of the storm made their progress very slow, and their anxiety made it seem still slower. From time to time they said to each other, in choaked and breathless accents, "Call up the people in those cabbins—there is a light in that house—they are all up—no wonder—who could sleep in such a night—hold the lanthorn low—it is impossible to keep footing on the strand." "Another gun!" they exclaimed, as the flash faintly broke through the darkness, and the heavy sound rolled round the shore, as if fired over the grave of the sufferers. "Here's the rock, hold fast, and cling together." They scaled it. "Great

God!" cried Melmoth, who was among the first, "what a night! and what a spectacle!—Hold up your lanthorns—do you hear cries?—shout to them—tell them there is help and hope near them. —Stay," he added, "let me scramble up that crag—they will hear my voice from that." He dashed desperately through the water, while the foam of the breakers from a distant rock almost choaked him, gained the point, and, elated by his success, shouted aloud with his utmost strength. But his voice, baffled and drowned by the tempest, was lost even to his own hearing. Its sound was faint and querulous, more like the wail of grief, than the encouraging cry of hope. At this moment, the racking clouds flying rapidly across the sky, like the scattered fugitives of a routed army, the moon burst forth with the sudden and appalling effulgence of lightning. Melmoth caught a full view of the vessel, and of her danger. She lay beating against a rock,

over which the breakers dashed their foam to the height of thirty feet. She was half in the water, a mere hulk, her rigging torn to shreds, her main mast cut away, and every sea she shipped, Melmoth could hear distinctly the dying cries of those who were swept away, or perhaps of those whose mind and body, alike exhausted, relaxed their benumbed hold of hope and life together,—knew that the next shriek that was uttered must be their own and their last. There is something so very horrible in the sight of human beings perishing so near us, that we feel one firm step rightly planted, one arm steadily held out, might save at least one,—yet feel we know not where to fix that step, and cannot stretch that arm, that Melmoth's senses reeled under the shock, and for a moment he echoed the storm with yells of actual insanity. By this time the country, having been alarmed by the news of a vessel going to pieces on the shore, had poured down in multitudes;

and those who, from experience or confidence, or even ignorance, repeated incessantly, "it is impossible to save her,—every soul on board must perish," involuntarily quickened their steps as they uttered the words, as if they were anxious to behold the fulfilment of their own prediction, while they appeared hurrying to avert it.

Of one man, in particular, it was observed, that during their hurried rush to the shore, he was, with what breath his haste allowed him, assuring the rest every moment, "she would be down before they could get there," and heard the ejaculations of "Christ save us! don't say that," "No, please God, we'll do some good," with a laugh almost of triumph. When they arrived, this man scaled a rock at the risk of his life, caught a view of the vessel, pointed out her desperate situation to those below, and shouted, "Didn't I tell you so? wasn't I right?" And as the storm increased, his voice was still heard, "wasn't I right?" And when the cries of the pe-

rishing crew were distinctly wafted to their ears, he was still heard in the interval repeating, "But wasn't I right?" Singular sentiment of pride, that can erect its trophies amid the grave. 'Tis in this spirit we give advice to those who suffer from life, as well as from the elements; and when the heart of the victim breaks, console ourselves by exclaiming, "*Didn't I foretell it all?* did I not tell you how it would be?" It is remarkable that this man lost his life that very night in the most deperate and fruitless attempt to save the life of one of the crew who was swimming within six yards of him. The whole shore was now crowded with helpless gazers, every crag and cliff was manned; it seemed like a battle fought at once by sea and land, between hope and despair. No effectual assistance could be rendered,—not a boat could live in that gale,—yet still, and to the last, cheers were heard from rock to rock,—terrible cheers, that announced safety was near and—impossi-

sible;—lanthorns held aloft in all directions, that displayed to the sufferers the shore all peopled with life, and the roaring and impassable waves between;—ropes flung out, with loud cries of help and encouragement, and caught at by some chilled, nerveless, and despairing hand, that only grasped the wave,—relaxed its hold,—was tossed once over the sinking head,—and then seen no more. It was at this moment that Melmoth, starting from his trance of terror, and looking round him, saw all, to the number of hundreds, anxious, restless, and occupied; and, though obviously in vain, the sight cheered his heart. "How much good there is in man," he cried, "when it is called forth by the sufferings of his fellows!" He had no leisure or inclination, then, to analyse the compound he called good, and resolve it into its component parts of curiosity, strong excitement, the pride of physical strength, or the comparative consciousness of safety. He had, indeed, no leisure; for just then he descried,

standing a few yards above him on the rock, a figure that shewed neither sympathy or terror,—uttered no sound,—offered no help. Melmoth could hardly keep his footing on the slippery and rocking crag on which he stood; the figure, who stood still higher, appeared alike unmoved by the storm, as by the spectacle. Melmoth's surtout, in spite of his efforts to wrap it round him, was fluttering in rags,—not a thread of the stranger's garments seemed ruffled by the blast. But this did not strike him so much as his obvious insensibility to the distress and terror around him, and he exclaimed aloud, "Good God! is it possible that any thing bearing the human form should stand there without making an effort, without expressing a feeling, for those perishing wretches!" A pause ensued, or the blast carried away the sound; but a few moments after, Melmoth distinctly heard the words, "Let them perish." He looked up, the figure still stood unmoved, the arms folded across

the breast, the foot advanced, and fixed as in defiance of the white and climbing spray of the wave, and the stern profile caught in the glimpses of the stormy and doubtful moon-light, seeming to watch the scene with an expression formidable, revolting, and unnatural. At this moment, at remendous wave breaking over the deck of the hulk, extorted a cry of horror from the spectators; they felt as if they were echoing that of the victims whose corses were in a few moments to be dashed against their feet, mangled and lifeless.

When the cry had ceased, Melmoth heard a laugh that chilled his blood. It was from the figure that stood above him. Like lightning then glanced on his memory the recollection of that night in Spain, when Stanton first encountered that extraordinary being, whose charmed life, "defying space and time," held such fatal influence over his, and when he first recognised his supposed demoniac character by the laugh with which he hailed the

spectacle of the blasted lovers. The echo of that laugh rung in Melmoth's ears; he believed it was indeed that mysterious being who was standing so near him. His mind, by its late intense and bewildering pursuits, at once heated and darkened, like the atmosphere under an incumbent thunder-cloud, had now no power of inquiry, of conjecture, or of calculation. He instantly began to climb the rock,—the figure was but a few feet above him,—the object of his daily and nightly dreams was at last within the reach of his mind and his arm,—was almost tangible. *Fang* and *Snare* * themselves, in all the enthusiasm of professional zeal, never uttered, "If I but once get him within my vice," with more eagerness than did Melmoth, as he scrambled up his steep and perilous path, to the ledge of the rock where the figure stood so calm and dark. Panting from the fury of the

* See Henry IV. Second Part.

storm, the vehemence of his own exertions, and the difficulty of the task, he was now almost foot to foot, and face to face, with the object of his pursuit, when, grasping at the loosened fragment of a stone whose fall could not have hurt a child, though on its tottering insecurity hung the life-grasp of a man, his hold failed—he fell backwards,—the roaring deep was beneath, seeming to toss its ten thousand arms to receive and devour him. He did not feel the instantaneous giddiness of his fall, but as he sunk he felt the splash, he heard the roar. He was engulphed, then for a moment thrown to the surface. He struggled with nothing to grasp at. He sunk with a vague thought, that if he could reach the bottom, if he could arrive at any thing solid, he was safe. Ten thousand trumpets then seemed to ring in his ears; lights flashed from his eyes. "He seemed to go through fire and water," and remembered no more till several days afterwards, when

he found himself in bed, the old gouvernante beside him, and uttered faintly, "What a horrid dream!" then sinking back as he felt his exhaustion, "and how weak it has left me!"

CHAPTER V.

"I have heard," said the Squire, "that from hell there is no *retention*."

CERVANTES.

FOR some hours after this exclamation, Melmoth lay silent, his memory returning, —his senses gradually defecated,—the intellectual lord slowly returning to his abdicated throne.—

"I remember all now," he cried, starting up in his bed with a sudden vehemence, that terrified his old nurse with the apprehension of returning insanity;

but when she approached the bed, candle in hand, cautiously veiling her eyes with the other, while she threw the full glare of the light on the face of the patient, she saw in a moment the light of sanity in his eyes, and the strength of health in his movements. To his eager inquiries of how he had been saved, how the storm had terminated, and whether any but himself had survived the wreck, she could not deny herself the gratification of answering, though conscious of his weakness, and solemnly charged neither to let him speak or hear, as she valued the recovery of his reason. She had faithfully observed the charge for several days,—a dreadful trial!—and now she felt like Fatima in Cymon, who, when threatened by the magician with the loss of speech, exclaims, "Barbarian, will not my death then satisfy you?"

She began her narrative, the effect of which was, to lull Melmoth into a profound repose before half of it was con-

cluded; he felt the full benefit of the invalids mentioned in Spenser, who used to hire Irish story-tellers, and found those indefatigable persons still pursuing the tale when they awoke. At first Melmoth listened with eager attention; soon he was in the situation of him described by Miss Baillie,

> "Who, half asleep, but faintly hears,
> The gossip's tale hum in his ears."

Soon after his lengthened respiration gave token that she was only "vexing the dull ear of a drowsy man;" while, as she closed the curtain, and shaded the light, the images of her story were faintly painted on his dream, that still seemed half a waking one.

In the morning Melmoth sat up, gazed round, remembered every thing in a moment, though nothing distinctly, but felt the most intense anxiety to see the stranger saved from the shipwreck, who, he

remembered the gouvernante had told him, (while her words seemed to falter on the threshold of his closing senses), was still alive, and an inmate in his house, but weak and ill from the bruises he had received, and the exhaustion and terror he had undergone. The opinions of the household on the subject of this stranger were various. The knowledge of his being a Catholic had conciliated their hearts, for the first act of his recovered reason was to request that a Catholic priest might be sent for, and the first use of his speech was to express his satisfaction that he was in a country where he might enjoy the benefits of the rites of his own church. So far all was well; but there was a mysterious haughtiness and reserve about him, that somewhat repelled the officious curiosity of his attendants. He spoke often to himself in a language they did not understand; they hoped relief from the priest on this point, but the priest, after listening long at the invalid's door, pronounced

the language in which he was soliloquizing *not to be Latin*, and, after a conversation of some hours with him, refused to tell what language the stranger spoke to himself in, and forbid all inquiry on the subject. This was bad enough; but, still worse, the stranger spoke English with ease and fluency, and therefore could have no right, as all the household argued, to torment them with those unknown sounds, that, sonorous and powerful as they were, seemed to their ears like an evocation of some invisible being.

"He asks for what he wants in English," said the harassed housekeeper, "and he can call for candle in English, and he can say he'll go to bed in English; and why the devil can't he do every thing in English?—He can say his prayers too in English to that picture he's always pulling out of his breast and talking to, though it's no saint, I am sure, he prays to, (from the glimpse I got of it), but more like the devil,—Christ save us!" All these strange

rumours, and ten thousand more, were poured into Melmoth's ears, fast and faster than he could receive them. "Is Father Fay in the house," said he at last, understanding that the priest visited the stranger every day; "if he be, let me see him." Father Fay attended him as soon as he quitted the stranger's apartment.

He was a grave and decent priest, well "spoken of by those that were without" the pale of his own communion; and as he entered the room, Melmoth smiled at the idle tattle of his domestics. "I thank you for your attention to this unfortunate gentleman, who, I understand, is in my house."—"It was my duty."—"I am told he sometimes speaks in a foreign tongue." The priest assented. "Do you know what countryman he is?" "He is a Spaniard," said the priest. This plain, direct answer, had the proper effect on Melmoth, of convincing him of its veracity, and of there being no mystery in the

business, but what the folly of his servants had made.

The priest proceeded to tell him the particulars of the loss of the vessel. She was an English trader bound for Wexford or Waterford, with many passengers on board; she had been driven up the Wicklow coast by stress of weather, had struck on the night of the 19th October, during the intense darkness that accompanied the storm, on a hidden reef of rocks, and gone to pieces. Crew, passengers, all had perished, except this Spaniard. It was singular, too, that this man had saved the life of Melmoth. While swimming for his own, he had seen him fall from the rock he was climbing, and, though his strength was almost exhausted, had collected its last remains to preserve the life of a being who, as he conceived, had been betrayed into danger by his humanity. His efforts were successful, though Melmoth was unconscious of them; and in the morning they were found on the

strand, locked in each other's hold, but stiff and senseless. They shewed some signs of life when an attempt was made to remove them, and the stranger was conveyed to Melmoth's house. "You owe your life to him," said the priest, when he had ended. "I shall go and thank him for it this moment," said Melmoth; but as he was assisted to rise, the old woman whispered to him with visible terror, "Jasus' sake, dear, don't tell him ye're a Melmoth, for the dear life! He has been as mad as any thing out of Bedlam, since some jist mintioned the name before him the ither night." A sickening recollection of some parts of the manuscript came over Melmoth at these words, but he struggled with himself, and proceeded to the apartment of the stranger.

The Spaniard was a man about thirty, of a noble form and prepossessing manners. To the gravity of his nation was superadded a deeper tint of peculiar melancholy. He spoke English fluently; and when

questioned on it by Melmoth, he remarked with a sigh, that he had learnt it in a painful school. Melmoth then changed the subject, to thank him with earnest gratitude for the preservation of his life. "Senhor," said the Spaniard, "spare me; if your life was no dearer to you than mine, it would not be worth thanks." "Yet you made the most strenuous exertions to save it," said Melmoth. "That was instinct," said the Spaniard. "But you also struggled to save mine," said Melmoth. "That was instinct too at the moment," said the Spaniard; then resuming his stately politeness, "or I should say, the influence of my better genius. I am wholly a stranger in this country, and must have fared miserably but for the shelter of your roof."

Melmoth observed that he spoke with evident pain, and he confessed a few moments afterwards, that though he had escaped without any serious injury, he had been so bruised and lacerated, that he still

breathed with difficulty, and hardly possessed the use of his limbs. As he concluded the account of his sufferings during the storm, the wreck, and the subsequent struggle for life, he exclaimed in Spanish, "God! why did the Jonah survive, and the mariners perish?" Melmoth, imagining he was engaged in some devotional ejaculation, was going to retire, when the Spaniard detained him. "Senhor, I understand your name is——" He paused, shuddered, and with an effort that seemed like convulsion, disgorged the name of Melmoth. "My name is Melmoth." "Had you an ancestor, a very remote one, who was—at a period perhaps beyond family-tradition——It is useless to inquire," said the Spaniard, covering his face with both his hands, and groaning aloud. Melmoth listened in mingled excitement and terror. "Perhaps, if you would proceed, I could answer you—go on, Senhor." "Had you," said the Spaniard, forcing himself to speak, abruptly and rapidly,

"had you, then, a relative who was, about one hundred and forty years ago, said to be in Spain." "I believe—yes, I fear—I had." "It is enough, Senhor—leave me—to-morrow perhaps—leave me now." "It is impossible to leave you now," said Melmoth, catching him in his arms before he sunk on the floor. He was not senseless, for his eyes were rolling with terrible expression, and he attempted to articulate. They were alone. Melmoth, unable to quit him, called aloud for water; and while attempting to open his vest, and give him air, his hand encountered a miniature portrait close to the heart of the stranger. As he touched it, his touch operated on the patient with all the force of the most powerful restorative. He grasped it with his own cold hand with a force like that of death, and muttered in a hollow but thrilling voice, "What have you done?" He felt eagerly the ribbon by which it was suspended, and, satisfied that his terrible treasure was safe, turned

his eyes with a fearful calmness of expression on Melmoth, "You know all, then?"—"I know nothing," said Melmoth faultering. The Spaniard rose from the ground, to which he had almost fallen, disengaged himself from the arms that supported him, and eagerly, but staggeringly, hurrying towards the candles, (it was night), held up the portrait full before Melmoth's eye. It was a miniature likeness of that extraordinary being. It was painted in a coarse and unartist-like style, but so faithfully, that the pencil appeared rather held by the mind than by the fingers.

"Was he—was the original of this—your ancestor?—Are you his descendant?—Are you the depository of that terrible secret which——" He again fell to the ground convulsed, and Melmoth, for whose debilitated state this scene was too much, was removed to his own apartment.

It was several days before he again saw

his visitor; his manner was then calm and collected, till he appeared to recollect the necessity of making an apology for his agitation at their last meeting. He began —hesitated—stopped; tried in vain to arrange his ideas, or rather his language; but the effort so obviously renewed his agitation, that Melmoth felt an exertion on his part necessary to avert its consequences, and began most inauspiciously to inquire into the motive of his voyage to Ireland. After a long pause, the Spaniard said, "That motive, Senhor, a few days past I believed it was not in mortal power to compel me to disclose. I deemed it incommunicable as it was incredible. I conceived myself to be alone on the earth, without sympathy and beyond relief. It is singular that accident should have placed me within the reach of the only being from whom I could expect either, and perhaps a developement of those circumstances which have placed me in a situation so extraordinary." This ex-

ordium, delivered with a composed but thrilling gravity, had an effect on Melmoth. He sat down and prepared to listen, and the Spaniard began to speak; but after some hesitation, he snatched the picture from his neck, and trampling on it with true continental action, exclaimed, "Devil! devil! thou choakest me!" and crushing the portrait, glass and all, under his feet, exclaimed, "Now I am easier."

The room in which they sat was a low, mean, wretchedly furnished apartment; the evening was tempestuous, and as the windows and doors rattled in the blast, Melmoth felt as if he listened to some herald of "fate and fear." A deep and sickening agitation shook his frame; and in the long pause that preceded the narrative of the Spaniard, the beating of his heart was audible to him. He rose, and attempted to arrest the narration by a motion of his hand; but the Spaniard mistook this for the anxiety of his impatience, and commenced his narrative, which, in

mercy to the reader, we shall give without the endless interruptions, and queries, and anticipations of curiosity, and starts of terror, with which it was broken by Melmoth.

Tale of the Spaniard.

"I AM, Senhor, as you know, a native of Spain, but you are yet to learn I am a descendant of one of its noblest houses,—a house of which she might have been proud in her proudest day,—the house of Monçada. Of this I was not myself conscious during the first years of my life; but during those years, I remember experiencing the singular contrast of being treated with the utmost tenderness, and kept in the most sordid privacy. I lived in a wretched house in the suburbs of Madrid with an old woman, whose affection

for me appeared prompted as much by interest as inclination. I was visited every week by a young cavalier and a beautiful female; they caressed me, called me their beloved child, and I, attached by the grace with which my young father's *capa* was folded, and my mother's veil adjusted, and by a certain air of indescribable superiority over those by whom I was surrounded, eagerly returned their caresses, and petitioned them to take me *home* with them; at these words they always wept, gave a valuable present to the woman I lived with, whose attention was always redoubled by this expected stimulant, and departed.

"I observed their visits were always short, and paid late in the evening; thus a shadow of mystery enveloped my infant days, and perhaps gave its lasting and ineffaceable tinge to the pursuits, the character, and the feelings of my present existence. A sudden change took place;—one day I was visited, splendidly dressed, and

carried in a superb vehicle, whose motion made me giddy with novelty and surprise, to a palace whose front appeared to me to reach the heavens. I was hurried through several apartments, whose splendour made my eyes ache, amid an army of bowing domestics, to a cabinet where sat an old nobleman, whom, from the tranquil majesty of his posture, and the silent magnificence that surrounded him, I felt disposed to fall down and worship as we do those saints, whom, after traversing the aisles of an immense church, we find niched in some remote and solitary shrine. My father and mother were there, and both seemed awed by the presence of that aged vision, pale and august; their awe increased mine, and as they led me to his feet, I felt as if about to be sacrificed. He embraced me, however, with some reluctance and more austerity; and when this ceremony was performed, during which I trembled, I was removed by a domestic, and conducted to an apartment where I was treated like the son of a grandee; in the evening I was

visited by my father and mother; they shed tears over me as they embraced me, but I thought I could perceive they mingled the tears of grief with those of fondness. Every thing around appeared so strange, that perhaps I felt something appropriate in this change. I was so much altered myself, that I expected an alteration in others, and the reverse would have struck me as a phenomenon.

"Change followed change with such rapidity, that it produced on me an effect like that of intoxication. I was now twelve years old, and the contracted habits of my earily life had had their usual effect, of exalting my imagination, while they impaired every other faculty. I expected an adventure whenever the door opened, and that was but seldom, to announce the hours of devotion, food, and exercise. On the third day after I was received into the palace of Monçada, the door was opened at an unusual hour, (a circumstance that made me tremble with anticipation), and my father

and mother, attended by a number of domestics, entered, accompanied by a youth whose superior height and already distinguished figure, made him appear my senior, though he was in fact a year younger.

"Alonzo," said my father to me, "embrace your brother." I advanced with all the eagerness of youthful affection, that feels delight from new claims on its store, and half wishes those new claims were endless; but the slow step of my brother, the measured air with which he extended his arms, and declined his head on my left shoulder for a moment, and then raising it, viewed me with eyes in whose piercing and haughty lustre there was not one beam of fraternity, repelled and disconcerted me. We had obeyed our father, however, and embraced. "Let me see you hand in hand together," said my father, as if he would have enjoyed the sight. I held out my hand to my brother, and we stood thus linked for a few moments, my father and mother remaining at some distance to gaze

on us; during these *few* moments, I had leisure to glance from my parents to my brother, and judge of the comparative effect our appearance thus contrasted might produce on them. The contrast was by no means favourable to me. I was tall, but my brother was much taller; he had an air of confidence, of conquest I might say; the brilliancy of his complexion could be equalled only by that of his dark eyes, which turned from me to our parents, and seemed to say, "Chuse between us, and reject me if you dare."

"My father and mother advanced and embraced us both. I clung round their necks; my brother submitted to their caresses with a kind of proud impatience, that seemed to demand a more marked recognition.

"I saw no more of them,—that evening the whole household, which perhaps contain two hundred domestics, were in despair. The Duke de Monçada, that awful vision of anticipated mortality whom I had seen

but once, was dead. The tapestry was torn from the walls; every room was filled with ecclesiastics; I was neglected by my attendants, and wandered through the spacious rooms, till I by chance lifted up a curtain of black velvet, and saw a sight which, young as I was, paralyzed me. My father and mother, dressed in black, sat beside a figure which I believed to be my grandfather asleep, but his sleep was very profound; my brother was there too, in a mourning dress, but its strange and grotesque disfigurement could not conceal the impatience with which he wore it, and the flashing eagerness of his expression, and the haughty brilliancy of his eye, shewed a kind of impatience of the part he was compelled to act.—I rushed forward;—I was withheld by the domestics;—I asked, "Why am I not permitted to be here, where my younger brother is?" An ecclesiastic drew me from the apartment. I struggled with him, and demanded, with an arrogance which suited my pretensions better than

my prospects, "Who I was?" "The grandson of the late Duke of Monçada," was the answer. "And why am I thus treated?" To this no answer. I was conveyed to my apartment, and closely watched during the interment of the Duke of Monçada. I was not permitted to attend his funeral. I saw the splendid and melancholy cavalcade depart from the palace. I ran from window to window to witness the funeral pomp, but was not allowed to accompany it. Two days after I was told a carriage waited for me at the gate. I entered it, and was conveyed to a convent of Ex-Jesuits, (as they were well known to be, though no one in Madrid dared to say so), where an agreement had been made for my board and education, and where I became an inmate that very day. I applied myself to my studies, my teachers were pleased, my parents visited me frequently, and gave the usual marks of affection, and all was well; till one day as they were retiring, I heard

an old domestic in their suite remark, how singular it was, that the eldest son of the (now) Duke de Monçada should be educated in a convent, and brought up to a monastic life, while the younger, living in a superb palace, was surrounded by teachers suited to his rank. The word "monastic life" thrilled in my ears; it furnished me with an interpretation not only of the indulgence I had experienced in the convent, (an indulgence quite inconsistent with the usual severity of their discipline), but of the peculiar language in which I had been always addressed by the Superior, the brethren, and the boarders. The former, whom I saw once a week, bestowed the most flattering praises on the progress I had made in my studies, (praises that covered me with blushes, for I well knew it was very moderate compared with that of the other boarders), and then gave me his benediction, but never without adding, "My God! thou wilt not suffer this lamb to wander from thy fold."

The brethren always assumed before me an air of tranquillity, that eulogized their situation more powerfully than the most exaggerated eloquence. The petty squabbles and intrigues of the convent, the bitter and incessant conflict of habits, tempers, and interests, the efforts of incarcerated minds for objects of excitement, the struggles to diversify endless monotony, and elevate hopeless mediocrity;—all that makes monastic life like the wrong side of tapestry, where we see only uncouth threads, and the harsh outlines, without the glow of the colours, the richness of the tissue, or the splendour of the embroidery, that renders the external surface so rich and dazzling; all this was carefully concealed. I heard something of it, however, and, young as I was, could not help wondering how men who carried the worst passions of life into their retreat, could imagine *that* retreat was a refuge from the erosions of their evil tempers, the monitions of conscience, and the accusations of

God. The same dissimulation was practised by the boarders; the whole house was in masquerade from the moment I entered it. If I joined the latter at the time of recreation, they went through the few amusements allowed them with a kind of languid impatience, as if it was an interruption of better pursuits to which they were devoted. One of them, coming up to me, would say, "What a pity that these exercises are necessary for the support of our frail nature! what a pity we cannot devote its whole powers to the service of God!" Another would say, "I never am so happy as in the choir! What a delightful eulogy was that pronounced by the Superior on the departed Fre Jose! How thrilling was that requiem! I imagined the heavens opened, and angels descending to receive his soul, as I listened to it!"

"All this, and much more, I had been accustomed to hear every day. I now began to understand it. I suppose they

thought they had a very weak person to deal with; but the bare-faced coarseness of their manœuvres only quickened my penetration, which began to be fearfully awake. I said to them, "Are you, then, intended for the monastic life?" "We hope so." "Yet I have heard you, Oliva, *once* (it was when you did not think I overheard you) I heard you complain of the length and tediousness of the homilies delivered on the eves of the saints."—"I was then under the influence of the evil spirit doubtless," said Oliva, who was a boy not older than myself; "Satan is sometimes permitted to buffet those whose vocation is but commencing, and whom he is therefore more afraid to lose." "And I have heard you, Balcastro, say you had not taste for music; and to me, I confess, that of the choir appears least likely to inspire a taste for it." "God has touched my heart since," replied the young hypocrite, crossing himself; "and you know, friend of my soul, there is a promise, that

the ears of the deaf shall be opened." "Where are those words?" "In the Bible." "The Bible?—But we are not permitted to read it." "True, dear Monçada, but we have the word of our Superior and the brethren for it, and that is enough." "Certainly; our spiritual guides must take on themselves the whole responsibility of that state, whose enjoyments and punishments they reserve in their own hands; but, Balcastro, are you willing to take this life on their word, as well as the next, and resign it before you have tried it?" "My dear friend, you only speak to tempt me." "*I do not speak to tempt*," said I, and was turning indignantly away, when the bell ringing, produced its usual effect on us all. My companions assumed a more sanctified air, and I struggled for a more composed one.

As we went to the church, they conversed in whispers, but those whispers were intended to reach my ear. I could hear them say, "It is in vain that he

struggles with grace; there never was a more decided vocation; God never obtained a more glorious victory. Already he has the look of a child of heaven;—the monastic gait,—the downcast look;—the motion of his arms naturally imitates the sign of the cross, and the very folds of his mantle arrange themselves, by a divine instinct, into those of a Monk's habit." And all this while my gait was disturbed, my countenance flushed, and often lifted to heaven, and my arms employed in hastily adjusting my cloak, that had fallen off my shoulder from my agitation, and whose disordered folds resembled any thing but those of a Monk's habit. From that evening I began to perceive my danger, and to meditate how to avert it. I had no inclination for the monastic life; but after vespers, and the evening exercise in my own cell, I began to doubt if this very repugnance was not itself a sin. Silence and night deepened the impression, and I lay awake for many hours,

supplicating God to enlighten me, to enable me not to oppose his will, but clearly to reveal that will to me; and if he was not pleased to call me to a monastic life, to support my resolution in undergoing every thing that might be inflicted on me, sooner than profane that state by extorted vows and an alienated mind. That my prayers might be more effectual, I offered them up first in the name of the Virgin, then in that of the Patron-saint of the family, and then of the Saint on whose eve I was born. I lay in great agitation till morning, and went to matins without having closed my eyes, I had, however, I felt, acquired *resolution*,—at least I thought so. Alas! I knew not what I had to encounter. I was like a man going to sea with a day's provision, and imagining he is victualled for a voyage to the poles. I went through my exercises (as they were called) with uncommon assiduity that day; already I felt the necessity

of imposition,—fatal lesson of monastic institutions. We dined at noon; and soon after my father's carriage arrived, and I was permitted to go for an hour on the banks of the Manzanares. To my surprise my father was in the carriage, and though he welcomed me with a kind of embarrassment, I was delighted to meet him. He was a layman at least,—*he might have a heart.*

I was disappointed at the measured phrase he addressed me in, and this froze me at once into a rigid determination, to be as much *on my guard with him,* as I must be within the walls of the convent. The conversation began, "You like your convent, my son?" "Very much," (there was not a word of truth in my answer, but the fear of circumvention always teaches falsehood, and we have only to thank our instructors). "The Superior is very fond of you." "He seems so." "The brethren are attentive to your studies, and capable of directing them, and appreciating your

progress." "They seem so." "And the boarders—they are sons of the first families in Spain, they appear all satisfied with their situation, and eager to embrace its advantages." "They seem so." My dear son, why have you thrice answered me in the same monotonous, unmeaning phrase?" "Because I thought it all *seeming*." "How, then, would you say that the devotion of those holy men, and the profound attention of their pupils, whose studies are alike beneficial to man, and redounding to the glory of the church to which they are dedicated—" "My dearest father,—I say nothing of them,—but *I dare* to speak of myself,—I can never be a monk,—if that is your object—spurn me,—order your lacqueys to drag me from this carriage,—leave me a beggar in the streets to cry * "*fire and water*,"—but do not make me a monk." My father appeared stunned

* "Fire for the cigars, and iced-water for drink."—A cry often heard in Madrid.

by this apostrophe. He did not utter a word. He had not expected such a premature developement of the secret which he imagined *he* had to disclose, not to hear disclosed. At this moment the carriage turned into the *Prado;* a thousand magnificent equipages, with plumed horses, superb caparisons, and beautiful women bowing to the cavaliers, who stood for a moment on the foot-board, and then bowed their adieus to the " ladies of their love," passed before our eyes. I saw my father, at this moment, arrange his superb mantle, and the silk net in which his long black hair was bound, and give the signal to his lacqueys to stop, that he might mingle among the crowd. I caught this moment,—I grasped his mantle.—" Father, you find this world delightful then,—would you ask me to resign it,—me,—who am your child."—" But you are too young for it, my son." " Oh, then, my father, I am surely much *too young for another world,* to which you would force me." " Force you, my child,

my first-born!" And these words he uttered with such tenderness, that I involuntarily kissed his hands, while his lips eagerly pressed my forehead. It was at this moment that I studied, with all the eagerness of hope, my father's physiognomy, or what artists would call his *physique*.

"He had been my parent before he was sixteen; his features were beautiful, his figure the most graceful and lover-like I ever beheld, and his early marriage had preserved him from all the evils of youthful excess, and spared the glow of feature, and elasticity of muscle, and grace of juvenility, so often withered by vice, almost before they have bloomed. He was now but twenty-eight, and looked ten years younger. He was evidently conscious of this, and as much alive to the enjoyments of youth, as if he were still in its spring. He was at the same moment rushing into all the luxuries of youthful enjoyment and voluptuous splendour, and dooming one, who was at least young enough to be his

son, to the frozen and hopeless monotony of a cloister. I laid hold of this with the grasp of a drowning man. But a drowning man never grasped a straw so weak as he who depends on the worldly feeling of another for the support of his own.

"Pleasure is very selfish; and when selfishness pleads to selfishness for relief, it is like a bankrupt asking his fellow-prisoner to go bail for him. This was my conviction at the moment, yet still I reflected, (for suffering supplies the place of experience in youth, and they are most expert casuists who have graduated only in the school of misfortune), I reflected, that a taste for pleasure, while it renders a man selfish in one sense, renders him generous in another. The real voluptuary, though he would not part with his slightest indulgence to save the world from destruction, would yet wish all the world to be enjoying itself, (provided it was not at his expence), because his own would be increased by it. To this I clung, and in-

treated my father to indulge me with another view of the brilliant scene before us. He complied, and his feelings, softened by this compliance, and exhilarated by the spectacle, (which interested *him* more than me, who observed it only for its effect on him), became more favourable than ever. I availed myself of this, and, while returning to the convent, threw the whole power of my nature and intellect into one (almost) shrieking appeal to his heart. I compared myself to the unhappy Esau, deprived of his birthright by a younger brother, and I exclaimed in his language, "Hast thou no blessing for me! Bless me, even me also, Oh my father!" My father was affected; he promised my intreaty every consideration; but he hinted some difficulty to be encountered on my mother's part, much on that of her Director, who (I afterwards found) governed the whole family, and still more remotely hinted at something insurmountable and inexplicable. He suffered me, however, to kiss his hand at

parting, and vainly struggled with his emotions when he felt it damp with my tears.

" It was not till two days after, that I was summoned to attend my mother's Director, who was waiting for me in the parlour. I deemed this delay the result of a long family debate, or (as it seemed to me) conspiracy ; and I tried to prepare myself for the multifarious warfare in which I had now to engage with parents, directors, superiors, and monks, and boarders, all sworn to win the day, and not caring whether they carried their point by storm, sap, mine, or blockade. I began to measure the power of the assailants, and to try to furnish myself with weapons suited to their various modes of attack. My father was gentle, flexible, and vacillating. I had *softened* him in my favour, and I felt that was all that could be done with him. But the Director was to be encountered with different arms. As I went down to the parlour, I composed my looks,

my gait, I modulated my voice, I adjusted my dress. I was on my guard, body, mind, mien, clothes, every thing. He was a grave, but mild-looking ecclesiastic; one must have had the treachery of Judas to suspect him of treachery. I felt disarmed, I even experienced some compunction. "Perhaps," said I, "I have all this while armed myself against a message of reconciliation." The Director began with some trifling inquiries about my health, and my progress in study, but he asked them in a tone of interest. I said to myself, it would not be decorous for him to enter on the subject of his visit too soon;—I answered him calmly, but my heart palpitated with violence. A silence ensued, and then suddenly turning towards me, he said, "My dear child, I understand your objections to a monastic life are insurmountable. I do not wonder at it; its habits must appear very unconciliating to youth, and, in fact, I know not to what period of life abstinence, privation, and solitude, are parti-

cularly agreeable; it was the wish of your parents doubtless; but"—This address, so full of candour, almost overpowered me; caution and every thing else forsook me as I exclaimed, "But what then, my father?" "But, I was going to observe, how rarely our own views coincide with those which others entertain for us, and how difficult it is to decide which are the least erroneous." "Was that all?" said I, shrinking with disappointment. "That was all; for instance, some people, (of whom I once happened to be one), might be fanciful enough to imagine, that the superior experience and proved affection of parents should qualify them to decide on this point better than their children; nay, I have heard some carry their absurdity so far, as to talk of the rights of nature, the obligations of duty, and the useful coercion of restraint; but since I had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with your resolution, I am beginning to be of opinion, that a youth, not thirteen years of age, may be an incom-

parable judge in the last resort, particularly when the question bears a trifling relation to his eternal as well as temporal interest; in such a case, he has doubtless the double advantage of dictating both to his spiritual and natural parents." "My father, I beg you to speak without irony or ridicule; you may be very clever, but I merely wish you to be intelligible and serious." "Do you wish me, then, to speak seriously?" and he appeared to *collect* himself as he asked this question. "Certainly." "Seriously, then, my dear child, do you not believe that your parents love you? Have you not received from your infancy every mark of affection from them? Have you not been pressed to their bosoms from your very cradle?" At these words I struggled vainly with my feelings, and wept, while I answered, "Yes." "I am sorry, my dear child, to see you thus overpowered; my object was to appeal to your reason, (for you have no common share of reasoning power),—and to your reason I

appeal;—can you suppose that parents, who have treated you with such tenderness, who love you as they do their own souls, could act (as your conduct charges them) with causeless and capricious cruelty towards you? Must you not be aware there is a reason, and that it must be a profound one? Would it not be more worthy of your duty, as well as your superior sense, to inquire into, than contend with it?" "Is it founded upon any thing in my conduct, then?—I am willing to do every thing,—to sacrifice every thing."—"I understand,—you are willing to do every thing but what is required of you,—and to sacrifice every thing but your own inclination." "But you have hinted at a reason." The Director was silent. "You urged me to inquire into it." The Director was silent still. "My father, I adjure you, by the habit you wear, unmuffle this terrible phantom to me; there is nothing I cannot encounter"--"Except the commands of your parents. But am I at liberty to discover

this secret to you?" said the Director, in a tone of internal debate. "Can I imagine that you, who have in the very outset outraged parental authority, will revere parental feelings?" "My father, I do not understand you." "My dear child, I am compelled to act with a caution and reserve unsuited to my character, which is naturally as open as yours. I dread the disclosure of a secret; it is repugnant to my habits of profound confidence; and I dread disclosing any thing to a character impetuous like yours. I feel myself reduced to a most painful situation." "My father, act and speak with candour, my situation requires it, and your own profession demands it from you. My father, remember the inscription over the confessional which thrilled my very blood to read, "God hears thee." Remember God hears you always, and will you not deal sincerely with one whom God has placed at your mercy?" I spoke with much agitation, and the Director appeared

affected for a moment; that is, he passed his hand over his eyes, which were as dry as—his heart. He paused for several minutes, and then said, "My dear child, dare I trust you? I confess I came prepared to treat you like a boy, but I feel I am disposed to consider you as a man. You have the intelligence, the penetration, the decision of a man. Have you the feelings of one?" "Try me, my father." I did not perceive that his irony, his *secret*, and his parade of feeling, were all alike theatrical, and substitutionary for real interest and sincerity. "If I should be inclined to trust you, my dear child,"—"I shall be grateful." "And secret." "And secret, my father." "Then imagine yourself"—"Oh! my father, let me not have to *imagine* any thing—tell me the truth." "Foolish boy,—am I then so bad a painter, that I must write the name under the figure." "I understand you, my father, and shall not interrupt you again." "Then imagine to yourself the honour of

one of the first houses in Spain; the peace of a whole family,—the feelings of a father,—the honour of a mother,—the interests of religion,—the eternal salvation of an individual, all suspended in one scale. What do you think could outweigh them?" "Nothing," I replied ardently. "Yet, in the opposite scale you throw *nothing*,—the caprice of a boy not thirteen years old;—this is all you have to oppose to the claims of nature, of society, and of God." "My father, I am penetrated with horror at what you have said,—does all this depend on me?" "It does,—it does all depend on you." "But how, then,—I am bewildered,—I am willing to make a sacrifice,—tell me what I am to do." "Embrace, my dear child, the monastic life; this will accomplish the views of all who love you, ensure your own salvation, and fulfil the will of God, who is calling you at this moment by the voices of your affectionate parents, and the supplications of the minister of heaven, who is now kneeling be-

fore you." And he sunk on his knees before me.

"This prostration, so unexpected, so revolting, and so like the monastic habit of artificial humiliation, completely annihilated the effect of his language. I retreated from his arms, which were extended towards me. "My father, *I cannot*,—I will never become a monk." "Wretch! and you refuse, then, to listen to the call of your conscience, the adjuration of your parents, and the voice of God?" The fury with which he uttered these words,—the change from a ministering angel to an infuriated and menacing demon, had an effect just contrary to what he expected. I said calmly, "My conscience does not reproach me,—I have never disobeyed its calls. My parents have adjured me only through your mouth; and I hope, for their sakes, the organ has not been inspired by them. And the voice of God, echoed from my own heart, bids me not to obey you, by adulterating his service

with prostituted vows." As I spoke thus, the Director changed the whole character of his figure, his attitude, and his language;—from the extreme of supplication or of terror, he passed in a moment, with the facility of an actor, to a rigid and breathless sternness. His figure rose from the ground before me like that of the Prophet Samuel before the astonished eyes of Saul. He dropt the dramatist, and was the monk in a moment. "And you will not take the vows?" "I will not, my father." "And you will brave the resentment of your parents, and the denunciations of the church." "I have done nothing to deserve either." "But you will encounter both, to cherish your horrid resolution of being the enemy of God." "I am not the enemy of God for speaking the truth." "Liar and hypocrite, you blaspheme!" "Stop, my father, these are words unbecoming your profession, and unsuited to this place." "I acknowledge the justice of the rebuke, and submit to

it, though uttered by the mouth of a child."—And he dropped his hypocritical eyes, folded his hands on his breast, and murmured, "Fiat voluntas tua. My dear child, my zeal for the service of God, and the honour of your family, to which I am attached equally by principle and affection, have carried me too far,—I confess it; but have I to ask pardon of you also, my child, for a redundance of that affection and zeal for your house, which its descendant has proved himself destitute of?" The mingled humiliation and irony of this address had no effect on me. He saw it had not; for after slowly raising his eyes to watch that effect, he saw me standing in silence, not trusting my voice with a word, lest I should utter something rash and disrespectful,—not daring to lift up my eyes, lest their expression should speak without making language necessary.

"I believe the Director felt his situation rather critical; his interest in the family depended on it, and he attempted to cover

his retreat with all the expertness and fertility of manœuvre which belong to an ecclesiastical tactician. "My dear child, we have been both wrong, I from zeal, and you from—no matter what; our business is to exchange forgiveness with each other, and to implore it of God, whom we have both offended. My dear child, let us prostrate ourselves before him, and even while our hearts are glowing with human passion, God may seize that moment to impress the seal of his grace on both, and fix it there for ever. Often the earthquake and the whirlwind are succeeded by the still, small voice, and God is there.—Let us pray." I fell on my knees, resolved to pray in my heart; but in a short time, the fervour of his language, the eloquence and energy of his prayers, dragged me along with him, and I felt myself compelled to pray against every dictate of my own heart. He had reserved this display for the last, and he had judged well. I never heard any thing so like inspiration; as I

listened, and involuntarily, to effusions that seemed to issue from no mortal lips, I began to doubt my own motives, and search my heart. I had disdained his taunts, I had defied and conquered his passion, but as he prayed, I wept. This going over the same ground with the heart, is one of the most painful and humiliating of all exercises; the virtue of yesterday becomes the vice of to-day; we ask with the desponding and restless scepticism of Pilate, "What is truth?" but the oracle that was so eloquent one moment, is dumb the next, or if it answers, it is with that ambiguity that makes us dread we have to consult again—again —and for ever—in vain.

I was now in a state quite fit for the Director's purpose; but he was fatigued with the part he had played with so little success, and took his leave, imploring me to continue my importunities to Heaven to direct and enlighten me, while he himself would supplicate all the saints in heaven

to touch the hearts of my parents, and reveal to them some means of saving me from the crime and perjury of a forced vocation, without *involving themselves in a crime, if possible, of blacker dye and greater magnitude.* Saying so he left me, to urge my parents, with all his influence, to pursue the most rigorous measures to enforce my adoption of the conventual life. His motives for doing so were sufficiently strong when he visited me, but their strength was increased tenfold before his departure. He had reckoned confidently on the power of his remonstrances; he had been repulsed; the disgrace of such a defeat rankled in the core of his heart. He had been only a *partizan* in the cause, but he was now a *party.* What was a matter of conscience before, was now a matter of honour with him; and I rather believe that the Director laid a greater stress on the latter, or made a great havock of confusion between both in his mind. Be that as it may, I passed a few days

after his visit in a state of indescribable excitement. I had something to hope, and that is often better than something to enjoy. The cup of hope always excites thirst, that of fruition disappoints or quenches it. I took long walks in the garden alone. I framed imaginary conversations to myself. The boarders observed me, and said to each other, according to their instructions, "He is meditating on his vocation, he is supplicating for illuminating grace, let us not disturb him." I did not undeceive them; but I reflected with increasing horror on a system that *forced* hypocrisy to a precocity unparalleled, and made the last vice of life the earliest of conventual youth. But I soon forgot reflection, to plunge into reverie. I imagined myself at the palace of my father; I saw him, my mother, and the Director, engaged in debate. I spoke for each, and felt for all. I supplied the passionate eloquence of the Director, his strong representations of my aversion to

the habit, his declaration that further importunity on their part would be as impious as it was fruitless. I saw all the impression I once flattered myself I had made on my father revived. I saw my mother yield. I heard the murmur of doubtful acquiescence,—the decision, the congratulations. I saw the carriage approaching,—I heard the convent doors fly open. Liberty,—liberty,—I was in their arms; no, I was at their feet. Let those who smile at me, ask themselves whether they have been indebted most to imagination or reality for all they have enjoyed in life, if indeed they have ever enjoyed any thing. In these internal dramas, however, I always felt that the persons did not speak with the interest I wished; and the speeches I put into their mouths would have been spoken with ten thousand times more animation by myself. Still I felt the most exquisite enjoyment in these reveries, and perhaps it was not diminished by

the thought how I was deceiving my companions the whole time. But dissimulation always teaches dissimulation; and the only question is, whether we shall be the masters of the art or its victims? a question soon decided by our self-love.

"It was on the sixth day that I heard, with a beating heart, a carriage stop. I could have sworn to the sound of its wheels. I was in the hall before I was summoned. I felt I could not be in the wrong, nor was I. I drove to my father's palace in a delirium,—a vision of repulse and of reconciliation, of gratitude and of despair. I was ushered into a room, where were assembled my father, my mother, and the Director, all seated, and silent as statues. I approached, I kissed their hands, and then stood at a small distance breathless. My father was the first to break silence, but he spoke very much with the air of a man who was repeating a part dictated to him; and the tone of his voice contradicted every word he *prepared* to

utter. "My son, I have sent for you, no longer to contend with your weak and wicked obstinacy, but to announce to you my own resolution. The will of Heaven and of your parents has devoted you to its service, and your resistance can only make us miserable, without in the least frustrating that resolution." At these words, gasping for breath, my lips involuntarily unclosed; my father imagined this was an attempt to reply, though in fact I was not capable of uttering a syllable, and hastened to prevent it. "My son, all opposition is unavailing, all discussion fruitless. Your destiny is decided, and though your struggles may render it wretched, they cannot reverse it. Be reconciled, my child, to the will of Heaven and your parents, which you may insult, but cannot violate. This reverend person can better explain to you the necessity of your obedience than I can." And my father, evidently weary of a task which he had reluctantly undertaken, was rising to

go away, when the Director detained him. "Stay, Senhor, and assure your son before you depart, that, since I last saw him, I have fulfilled my promise, and urged every topic on your mind, and that of the duchess, that I thought might operate for his *best interests*." I was aware of the hypocritical ambiguity of this expression; and, collecting my breath, I said, "Reverend father, as a son I seek not to employ an intercessor with my own parents. I stand before them, and if I have not an intercessor in their hearts, your mediation must be ineffectual altogether. I implored you merely to state to them my invincible reluctance." They all interrupted me with exclamations, as they repeated my last words,—"Reluctance! invincible! Is it for this you have been admitted to our presence? Is it for this we have borne so long with your contumacy, only to hear it repeated with aggravations?" "Yes, my father,—yes, for this or nothing. If I am not permitted to speak, why am I suffered

in your presence?" "Because we hoped to witness your submission." "Allow me to give the proofs of it on my knees;"—and I fell on my knees, hoping that my posture might soften the effect of the words I could not help uttering. I kissed my father's hand,—he did not withdraw it, and I felt it tremble. I kissed the skirt of my mother's robe,—she attempted to withdraw it with one hand, but with the other she hid her face, and I thought I saw tears bursting through her fingers. I knelt to the Director too, and besought his benediction, and struggled, though with revolting lips, to kiss his hand; but he snatched his habit from my hand, elevated his eyes, spread out his fingers, and assumed the attitude of a man who recoils in horror from a being who merits the extreme of malediction and reprobation. Then I felt my only chance was with my parents. I turned to them, but they shrunk from me, and appeared willing to devolve the remainder of the task on the

Director. He approached me. "My child, you have pronounced your reluctance to *the life of God* invincible, but may there not be things more invincible even to your resolution? The curses of that God, confirmed by those of your parents, and deepened by all the fulminations of the church, whose embraces you have rejected, and whose holiness you have desecrated by that rejection." "Father, these are terrible words, but I have no time now but for meanings." "Besotted wretch, I do not understand you,—you do not understand yourself." "Oh! I do,—I do!" I exclaimed. And turning to my father, still on my knees, I cried, "My dear father, is life,—human life, all shut up from me?" "It is," said the Director, answering for my father. "Have I no resource?" "None." "No profession?" "*Profession!* degenerate wretch!" "Let me embrace the meanest, but do not make me a monk." "Profligate as weak." "Oh! my father," still call-

ing on my father, "let not this man answer for you. Give me a sword,—send me into the armies of Spain to seek death,—death is all I ask, in preference to that life you doom me to." "It is impossible," said my father, gloomily returning from the window against which he had been leaning; "the honour of an illustrious family,—the dignity of a Spanish grandee—" "Oh! my father, of how little value will that be, when I am consuming in my early grave, and you die broken-hearted on it, over the flower your own voice has doomed to wither there." My father trembled. "Senhor, I entreat,—I command you to retire; this scene will unfit you for the devotional duties you must perform this evening." "And you leave me then?" I cried as they departed. "Yes,—yes,"—repeated the Director; "leave you burdened with the curse of your father." "Oh no!" exclaimed my father; but the Director had hold of his hand, and pressed it strongly. "Of your mother," he repeat-

ed. I heard my mother weep aloud, and felt it like a repeal of that curse; but she dared not speak, and I could not. The Director had now two victims in his hands, and the third at his feet. He could not avoid showing his triumph. He paused, collected the full power of his sonorous voice, and thundered forth, "And of God!" And as he rushed from the room, accompanied by my father and mother, whose hands he grasped, I felt as if struck by a thunderbolt. The rushing of their robes, as he dragged them out, seemed like the whirlwind that attends the presence of the destroying angel. I cried out, in my hopeless agony of destitution, "Oh! that my brother were here to intercede for me,"—and, as I uttered these words, I fell. My head struck against a marble table, and I sunk on the floor covered with blood.

"The domestics (of whom, according to the custom of the Spanish nobility, there were about two hundred in the palace) found me in this situation. They

uttered outcries,—assistance was procured,—it was believed that I had attempted to kill myself; but the surgeon who attended me happened to be a man both of science and humanity, and having cut away the long hair clotted with blood, and surveyed the wound, he pronounced it trifling. My mother was of his opinion, for within three days I was summoned to her apartment. I obeyed the summons. A black bandage, severe head-ache, and an unnatural paleness, were the only testimonies of my accident, as it was called; and the Director had suggested to her that this was the time to FIX THE IMPRESSION. How well religious persons understand the secret of making every event of the present world operate on the future, while they pretend to make the future predominate over the present. Were I to outlive the age of man, I should never forget my interview with my mother. She was alone when I entered, and seated with her back to me. I knelt and kissed her hand. My

paleness and my submission seemed to affect her,—but she struggled with her emotions, overcame them, and said in a cold *dictated* tone, "To what purpose are those marks of exterior reverence, when your heart disowns them?" "Madam, I am not conscious of that." "Not conscious! How then are you here? How is it that you have not, long before this, spared your father the shame of supplicating his own child,—the shame, still more humiliating, of supplicating him in vain; spared the Father Director the scandal of seeing the authority of the church violated in the person of its minister, and the remonstrances of duty as ineffectual as the calls of nature? And me,—oh! why have you not spared me this hour of agony and shame?" and she burst into a flood of tears, that drowned my soul as she shed them. "Madam, what have I done that deserves the reproach of your tears? My disinclination to a monastic life is no crime?" "In you it is a crime." "But how then,

dear mother, were a similar choice offered to my brother, would his rejection of it be deemed a crime?" I said this almost involuntarily, and merely by way of comparison. I had no ulterior meaning, nor the least idea that one could be developed by my mother, except a reference to an unjustifiable partiality. I was undeceived, when she added, in a voice that chilled my blood, "There is a great difference between you." "Yes, Madam, he is your favourite." "No, I take Heaven to witness, —no;" and she, who had appeared so severe, so decisive, and so impenetrable before, uttered these words with a sincerity that penetrated to the bottom of my heart;—she appeared to be appealing to Heaven against the prejudices of her child. I was affected—I said, "But, Madam, this difference of circumstances is inexplicable." "And would you have it explained *by me?*" "By any one, Madam." "*By me!*" she repeated, not hearing me; then kissing a crucifix than hung on her bosom, "My

God! the chastisement is just, and I submit to it, though inflicted by my own child. You are illegitimate," she added, turning suddenly towards me; "you are illegitimate,—your brother is not; and your intrusion into your father's house is not only its disgrace, but a perpetual monitor of that crime which it aggravates without absolving." I stood speechless. "Oh! my child," she continued, "have mercy on your mother. Has not this confession, extorted from her by her own son, been sufficient to expiate her offence?" "Go on, Madam, I can bear any thing now." "You must bear it, for you have forced me to this disclosure. I am of rank far inferior to your father,—you were our first child. He loved me, and forgiving my weakness as a proof of my devotion to him, we were married, and your brother is our lawful child. Your father, anxious for my reputation, since I was united to him, agreed with me, as our marriage was private, and its date uncer-

tain, that you should be announced as our legitimate offspring. For years your grandfather, incensed at our marriage, refused to see us, and we lived in retirement, —would that I had died there. A few days before his death he relented, and sent for us; it was no time to acknowledge the imposition practised on him, and you were introduced as the child of his son, and the heir of his honours. But from that hour I have never known a moment's peace. The lie I had dared to utter before God and the world, and to a dying parent,—the injustice done to your brother,—the violation of natural duties and of legal claims,—the convulsions of my conscience, that heavily upbraided me, not only with vice and perjury, but with sacrilege." "Sacrilege!" "Yes; every hour you delay the assumption of the habit is a robbery of God. Before you were born, I devoted you to him, as the only expiation of my crime. While I yet bore you in my bosom without life, I dared to implore his forgiveness only on the con-

dition of your future intercession for me as a minister of religion. *I relied on your prayers before you could speak.* I proposed to intrust my penitence to one, who, in becoming the child of God, had atoned for *my* offence in making him the child of sin. In imagination I knelt already at your confessional,—heard you, by the authority of the church, and the commission of Heaven, pronounce me forgiven. I saw you stand beside my dying bed,—I felt you press the cross to my cold lips, and point to that heaven where I hoped my vow had already secured a seat for you. Before your birth I had laboured to lift you to heaven, and my recompence is, that your obstinacy threatens to drag us both into the gulph of perdition. Oh! my child, if our prayers and intercessions are available to the delivery of the souls of our departed relatives from punishment, hear the adjuration of a living parent, who implores you not to seal her everlasting condemnation!" I was unable to answer, my

mother saw it, and redoubled her efforts. "My son, if I thought that my kneeling at your feet would soften your obduracy, I would prostrate myself before them this moment." "Oh! madam, the sight of such unnatural humiliation ought to kill me." "And yet you will not yield—the agony of this confession, the interests of my salvation and your own, nay, the preservation of my life, are of no weight with you." She perceived that these words made me tremble, and repeated, "Yes, my life; beyond the day that your inflexibility exposes me to infamy, I will not live. If you have resolution, I have resolution too; nor do I dread the result, for God will charge on your soul, not on mine, the crime an unnatural child has forced me to—and yet you will not yield.—Well, then, the prostration of my body is nothing to that prostration of soul you have already driven me to. I kneel to my own child for life and for salvation," and she knelt to me. I attempted to raise her;

she repelled me, and exclaimed, in a voice hoarse with despair, "And you will not yield?" "I do not say so." "And what, then, do you say?—raise me not, approach me not, till you answer me." "That I will think." "Think! you must decide." "I do, then, I do." "But how?" "To be whatever you would have me." As I uttered these words, my mother fell in a swoon at my feet. As I attempted to lift her up, scarce knowing if it was not a corse I held in my arms, I felt I never could have forgiven myself if she had been reduced to that situation by my refusing to comply with her last request. *

* * * *

I was overpowered with congratulations, blessings, and embraces. I received them with trembling hands, cold lips, a rocking brain, and a heart that felt turned to stone. Every thing passed before me as in a dream. I saw the pageant move on, without a thought of who was to be the victim. I returned to the con-

vent—I felt my destiny was fixed—I had no wish to avert or arrest it—I was like one who sees an enormous engine (whose operation is to crush him to atoms) put in motion, and, stupified with horror, gazes on it with a calmness that might be mistaken for that of one who was coolly analysing the complication of its machinery, and calculating the resistless crush of its blow. I have read of a wretched Jew *, who, by the command of a Moorish emperor, was exposed in an area to the rage of a lion who had been purposely kept fasting for eight and forty hours. The horrible roar of the famished and infuriated animal made even the executioners tremble as they fastened the rope round the body of the screaming victim. Amid hopeless struggles, supplications for mercy, and shrieks of despair, he was bound, raised, and lowered into the area. At the moment he touched the ground, he fell prostrate, stupefied, annihilated,

* Vide Buffa—*Anachronism prepense.*

He uttered no cry—he did not draw a breath—he did not make an effort—he fell contracting his whole body into a ball, and lay as senseless as a lump of earth.—So it fared with me; my cries and struggles were over,—I had been flung into the area, and I lay there. I repeated to myself, "I am to be a monk," and there the debate ended. If they commended me for the performance of my exercises, or reproved me for my deficiency, I showed neither joy nor sorrow,—I said only, "I am to be a monk." If they urged me to take exercise in the garden of the convent, or reproved me for my excess in walking beyond the allotted hours, I still answered, "I am to be a monk." I was showed much indulgence in these wanderings. A son—the eldest son of the Duke de Monçada, taking the vows, was a glorious triumph for the ex-Jesuits, and they did not fail to make the most of it. They asked what books I would like to read,—I answered, "What they pleased." They

saw I was fond of flowers, and vases of porcelain, filled with the most exquisite produce of their garden, (renewed every day), embellished my apartment. I was fond of music,—that they perceived from my involuntary joining in the choir. My voice was good, and my profound melancholy gave an expression to my tones, which these men, always on the watch to grasp at any thing that may aggrandize them, or delude their victims, assured me were like the tones of inspiration.

"Amid these displays of indulgence, I exhibited an ingratitude totally foreign from my character. I never read the books they furnished me with,—I neglected the flowers with which they filled my room,—and the superb organ they introduced into my apartment, I never touched, except to elicit some deep and melancholy chords from its keys. To those who urged me to employ my talents for painting and music, I still answered with the same apathetic monotony, "I am to be a monk." "But, my

brother, the love of flowers, of music, of all that can be consecrated to God, is also worthy of the attention of man —you abuse the indulgence of the Superior." "Perhaps so." "You must, in gratitude to God, thank him for these lovely works of his creation;"—the room was at this time filled with carnations and roses;—"you must also be grateful to him for the powers with which he has distinguished you in hymning his praises—your voice is the richest and most powerful in the church." "I don't doubt it." "My brother, you answer at random." "Just as I feel—but don't heed that." "Will you take a turn in the garden?" "If you please." "Or will you seek a moment's consolation from the Superior?" "If you please." "But why do you speak with such apathy? are the odour of the flowers, and the consolations of your Superior, to be appreciated in the same breath?" "I believe so." "Why?" "Because I am to be a monk." "Nay, brother, will you

never utter any thing but that phrase, which carries no meaning with it but that of stupefaction or delirium?" "Imagine me, then, stupefied, delirious—what you please—you know I must be a monk." At these words, which I suppose I uttered in a tone unlike that of the usual *chaunt* of monastic conversation, another interposed, and asked what I was uttering in so loud a key? "I am only saying," I replied, "that I must be a monk." "Thank God it is no worse," replied the querist, "your contumacy must long ago have wearied the Superior and the brethren—thank God it's no worse." At these words I felt my passions resuscitated,—I exclaimed, "*Worse!* what have I to dread?—am I not to be a monk?" From that evening, (I forget when it occurred), my liberty was abridged; I was no longer suffered to walk, to converse with the boarders or novices,—a separate table was spread for me in the refectory,—the seats near mine were left vacant at service,—yet still my cell was

embellished with flowers and engravings, and exquisitely-wrought toys were left on my table. I did not perceive they were treating me as a lunatic, yet certainly my foolishly reiterated expressions might have justified them in doing so,—they had their own plans in concert with the Director,—my silence went for proof. The Director came often to visit me, and the hypocritical wretches *would* accompany him to my cell. I was generally (for want of other occupation) attending to my flowers, or gazing at the engravings,—and they would say, "You see he is as happy as he wishes to be—he wants for nothing—he is quite occupied in watching those roses." "No, I am not occupied," I returned, "it is occupation I want." Then they shrugged their shoulders, exchanged mysterious looks with the Director, and I was glad when they were gone, without reflecting on the mischief their absence threatened me with. At this moment, consultation after consultation was held at the palace de

Monçada, whether I could be induced to shew sufficient intellect to enable me to pronounce the vows. It seems the reverend fathers were as anxious as their old enemies the Moors, to convert an idiot into a saint. There was now a party combined against me, that it would have required more than the might of man to resist. All was uproar from the palace de Monçada to the convent, and back again. I was mad, *contumacious*, heretical, idiotical, —any thing—every thing—that could appease the jealous agony of my parents, the cupidity of the monks, or the ambition of the ex-Jesuits, who laughed at the terror of all the rest, and watched intently over their own interests. Whether I was mad or not, they cared very little; to enroll a son of the first house of Spain among their converts, or to imprison him as a madman, or to exorcise him as a demoniac, was all the same to them. There was a *coup de theatre* to be exhibited, and provided they played first parts, they cared little about

the catastrophe. Luckily, during all this uproar of imposture, fear, falsehood, and misrepresentation, the Superior remained steady. He let the tumult go on, to aggrandize his importance; but he was resolved all the time that I should have sanity enough to enable me to take the vows. I knew nothing of all this, but was astonished at being summoned to the parlour on the last eve of my noviciate. I had performed my religious exercises with regularity, had received no rebukes from the master of the novices, and was totally unprepared for the scene that awaited me. In the parlour were assembled my father, mother, the Director, and some other persons whom I did not recognize. I advanced with a calm look, and equal step. I believe I was as much in possession of my reason as any one present. The Superior, taking my arm, led me round the room, saying, "You see——" I interrupted him—"Sir, what is this intend-

ed for?" He answered only by putting his finger on his lips, and then desired me to exhibit my drawings. I brought them, and offered them on one knee, first to my mother, and then to my father. They were sketches of monasteries and prisons. My mother averted her eyes —and my father said, pushing them away, "I have no taste in those things." "But you are fond of music doubtless," said the Superior; "you must hear his performance." There was a small organ in the room adjacent to the parlour; my mother was not admitted there, but my father followed to listen. Involuntarily I selected an air from the "Sacrifice of Jephtha." My father was affected, and bid me cease. The Superior imagined this was not only a tribute to my talent, but an acknowledgement of the power of his party, and he applauded without measure or judgement. Till that moment, I had never conceived I could be the object of a

party in the convent. The Superior was determined to make me a Jesuit, and therefore was pledged for my *sanity*. The monks wished for an exorcism, an *auto de fe*, or some such bagatelle, to diversify the dreariness of monasticism, and therefore were anxious I should be, or appear, deranged or possessed. Their pious wishes, however, failed. I had appeared when summoned, *behaved* with scrupulous correctness, and the next day was appointed for my taking the vows.

"That next day—Oh! that I could describe it!—but it is impossible—the profound stupefaction in which I was plunged prevented my noticing things which would have inspired the most uninterested spectator. I was so absorbed, that though I remember facts, I cannot paint the slightest trace of the feelings which they excited. During the night I slept profoundly, till I was awoke by a knock at my door.—"My dear child, how are you employed?" I knew

the voice of the Superior, and I replied, "My father, I was sleeping." "And I was macerating myself at the foot of the altar for you, my child,—the scourge is red with my blood." I returned no answer, for I felt the maceration was better merited by the betrayer than the betrayed. Yet I was mistaken; for in fact, the Superior felt some compunction, and had undergone this penance on account of my repugnance and alienation of mind, more than for his own offences. But Oh! *how false is a treaty made with God, which we ratify with our own blood,* when he has declared there is but one sacrifice he will accept, even that of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world! Twice in the night, I was thus disturbed, and twice answered in the same language. The Superior, I make no doubt, was sincere. He thought he was doing all for God, and his bleeding shoulders testified his zeal. But I was in such a state of mental ossification,

that I neither felt, heard, or understood; and when he knocked a second and third time at the door of my cell to announce the severity of his macerations, and the efficacy of his intercessions with God, I answered, " Are not criminals allowed to sleep the night before their execution?" At hearing these words, which must have made him shudder, the Superior fell prostrate before the door of my cell, and I turned to sleep again. But I could hear the voices of the monks as they raised the Superior, and bore him to his cell. They said, " He is incorrigible—you humiliate yourself in vain—when he is *ours*, you shall see him a different being—he shall then prostrate himself before you." I heard this, and slept on. The morning came—I knew what it would bring—I dramatized the whole scene in my own mind. I imagined I witnessed the tears of my parents, the sympathy of the congregation. I thought I saw the hands

of the priests tremble as they tossed the incense, and even the acolytes shiver as they held their robes. Suddenly my mind changed: I felt—what was it I felt?—a union of malignity, despair, and power, the most formidable. Lightning seemed flashing from my eyes as I reflected,—I might make the sacrificers and the sacrificed change places in one moment,—I might blast my mother as she stood, by a word,—I might break my father's heart, by a single sentence,—I might scatter more desolation around me, than it was apparently possible for human vice, human power, or human malignity, more potent than both, to cause to its most abject victim.—Yes!—on that morning I felt within myself the struggles of nature, feeling, compunction, pride, malevolence, and despair.—The former I had brought with me, the latter had been all acquired in the convent. I said to those who attended me that morning, "You are arraying me for

a victim, but I can turn the executioners into the victims if I please"—and I laughed. The laugh terrified those who were about me—they retreated—they represented my state to the Superior. He came to my apartment. The whole convent was by this time alarmed—their credit was at stake—the preparations had all been made —the whole world was determined I was to be a monk, mad or not.

" The Superior was terrified, I saw, as he entered my apartment. " My son, what means all this?" " Nothing, my father—nothing but a sudden thought that has struck me." " We will discuss it another time, my son; at present—" " *At present,*" I repeated with a laugh that must have lacerated the Superior's ears— " At present I have but one alternative to propose—let my father or my brother take my place—that is all. I will never be a monk." The Superior, at these words, ran in despair round the cell. I followed him, exclaiming, in a voice that must have filled

him with horror, "I exclaim against the vows—let those who forced me to it, take the guilt on themselves—let my father, in his own person, expiate his guilt in bringing me into the world—let my brother sacrifice his pride—why must I be the only victim of the crime of the one, and the passions of the other?" "My son, all this was arranged before." "Yes, I know that—I know that by a decree of the Almighty I was doomed to be cursed even in my mother's womb, but I will never subscribe that decree with my own hand." "My son, what can I say to you—you have passed your noviciate." "Yes, in a state of stupefaction." "All Madrid is assembled to hear you take your vows." "Then all Madrid shall hear me renounce them, and disavow them." "This is the very day fixed on. The ministers of God are prepared to yield you to his arms. Heaven and earth,—all that is valuable in time, or precious in eternity, are summoned, are waiting for the irrevocable words that seal

your salvation, and ensure that of those you love. What demon has taken possession of you, my child, and seized the moment you were coming to Christ, to cast you down, and tear you? How shall I—how shall the fraternity, and all the souls who are to escape from punishment by the merit of your prayers, answer to God for your horrible apostacy?" "Let them answer for themselves—let every one of us answer for ourselves—that is the dictate of reason." "Of reason, my deluded child,—when had reason any thing to do with religion?" I had sat down, folded my arms on my breast, and forbore to answer a word. The Superior stood with his arms crossed, his head declined, his whole figure in an air of profound and mortified contemplation. Any one else would have imagined him seeking God in the abysses of meditation, but I felt he was only seeking him where he is never to be found,—in the abyss of that heart which is "deceitful and desperately wicked." He

approached—I exclaimed, "Come not near me!—you will renew again the story of my submission—I tell you it was artificial;—of my regularity in devotional exercises—it was all mechanism or imposture;—of my conformity to discipline—it was all practised with the hope of escaping from it ultimately. Now, I feel my conscience discharged and my heart lightened. Do you hear, do you understand me? These are the first words of truth I ever uttered since I entered these walls—the only ones that will, perhaps, ever be uttered within them—aye, treasure them up, knit your brows, and cross yourself, and elevate your eyes as you will. Go on with your religious drama. What is there you see before you so horrible, that you recoil, that you cross yourself, that you lift your eyes and hands to heaven?—a creature whom despair has driven to utter desperate truth! Truth may be horrible to the inmates of a convent, whose whole life is artificial and perverted,—whose very hearts are sophis-

ticated beyond the hand even of Heaven (which they alienate by their hypocrisy) to touch. But I feel I am at this moment an object of less horror in the sight of the Deity, than if I were standing at his altar, to (as you would urge me) insult him with vows, which my heart was bursting from my bosom to contradict, at the moment I uttered them."

"At these words, which I must have uttered with the most indecent and insulting violence, I almost expected the Superior would have struck me to the earth,—would have summoned the lay-brothers to bear me to confinement,—would have shut me up in the dungeon of the convent, for I knew there was such a place. Perhaps I wished for all this. Driven to extremity myself, I felt a kind of pride in driving others to it in return. Any thing of violent excitement, of rapid and giddy vicissitude, or even of intense suffering, I was prepared for, and equal to, at that moment. But these paroxysms soon exhaust themselves and us by their violence.

Astonished by the Superior's silence, I raised my eyes to him. I said, in a tone of moderation that seemed unnatural to my own ears, "Well, let me hear my sentence." He was silent still. He had *watched the crisis*, and now skilfully seized the turn of the mental disease, to exhibit his applications. He was standing before me meek and motionless, his arms crossed, his eyes depressed, not the slightest indication of resentment to be traced in his whole figure. The folds of his habit, refusing to announce his internal agitation, seemed as they were cut out of stone. His silence imperceptibly softened me,—I blamed myself for my violence. Thus men of the world command us by their passions, and men of the other world by the apparent suppression of them. At last he said, "My son, you have revolted from God, resisted his Holy Spirit, profaned his sanctuary, and insulted his minister,—in his name and my own I forgive you all. Judge of the various cha-

racters of our systems, by their different results on us two. You revile, defame, and accuse,—I bless and forgive; which of us is then under the influence of the gospel of Christ, and within the pale of the church's benediction? But leaving this question, which you are not at present in a frame to decide, I shall urge but one topic more; if that fails, I shall no longer oppose your wishes, or urge you to prostitute a sacrifice which man would despise, and God must disdain. I add, I will even do my utmost to facilitate your wishes, which are now in fact my own." At these words, so full of truth and benignity, I was rushing to prostrate myself at his feet, but fear and experience checked me, and I only bowed. "Promise me merely that you will wait with patience till this last topic is urged; whether it succeeds or not I have now little interest, and less care." I promised,—he went out. A few moments after he returned. His air was a little more disturbed, but still struggling for a

calmness of expression. There was agitation about him, but I knew not whether it was felt on his own account or mine. He held the door half open, and his first sentence astonished me.—"My son, you are well acquainted with the classical histories." "But what is that to the purpose, my father?" "You remember a remarkable story of the Roman general, who spurned from the steps of his tribune, people, senators, and *priests*,—trampled on all law,—outraged all religion,—but was at last moved by nature, for, when his mother prostrated herself before him, and exclaimed, 'My son, before you tread the streets of Rome, you must first tread on the body of her who bore you!' he relented." "I remember all, but to what does this tend?" "*To this*," and he threw open the door; "now, prove yourself, if you can, more obdurate than a heathen." As the door opened, across the threshold lay my mother, prostrate on her face. She said in a stifled voice, "Advance,—

break your vows,—but you must rush to perjury over the body of your mother." I attempted to raise her, but she clung to the ground, repeating the same words; and her magnificent dress, that overspread the floor of stone with gems and velvet, frightfully contrasted her posture of humiliation, and the despair that burned in her eyes, as she raised them to me for a moment. Convulsed with agony and horror, I reeled into the arms of the Superior, who seized that moment to bear me to the church. My mother followed,—the ceremony proceeded. I vowed chastity, poverty, and obedience, and in a few moments my destiny was decided. *

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"Day followed day for many a month, of which I have no recollections, nor wish to have any. I must have experienced many emotions, but they all subsided like the waves of the sea under the darkness of a midnight sky,—their fluctuation continues, but there is no light to mark their

motion, or trace when they rise and fall. A deep stupor pervaded my senses and soul; and perhaps, in this state, I was best fitted for the monotonous existence to which I was doomed. It is certain that I performed all the conventual functions with a regularity that left nothing to be blamed, and an apathy that left nothing for praise. My life was a sea without a tide. The bell did not toll for service with more mechanical punctuality than I obeyed the summons. No automaton, constructed on the most exquisite principles of mechanism, and obeying those principles with a punctuality almost miraculous, could leave the artist less room for complaint or disappointment, than I did the Superior and community. I was always first in my place in the choir. I received no visits in the parlour,—when I was permitted to go, I declined the permission. If penance was enjoined, I submitted; if relaxation was permitted, I never partook of it. I never asked a dispensation from

morning prayers, or from vigils. I was silent in the refectory,—in the garden I walked alone. I neither thought, nor felt, nor lived,—if life depends on consciousness, and the motions of the will. I slept through my existence like the Simorgh in the Eastern fable, but this sleep was not to last long. My abstraction and calmness would not do for the Jesuits. My stupor, my noiseless tread, my fixed eyes, my ghastly silence, might indeed have impressed a superstitious community with the idea that it was no human creature who stalked through their cloisters, and haunted their choir. But they had quite different ideas. They considered all this as a tacit reproach to the struggles, the squabbles, the intrigues, and the circumventions, in which they were immersed, body and soul, from morn till night. Perhaps they thought I was lying in reserve, only to watch them. Perhaps there might have been a dearth of some matter of curiosity or complaint in the convent just then,

—a very little serves for either. However it was, they began to revive the old story of my being deranged, and resolved to make the most of it. They whispered in the refectory, consulted in the garden,—shook their heads, pointed at me in the cloister, and finally, I faithfully believe, worked themselves into the conviction that what they wished or imagined was actually true. Then they all felt their consciences interested in the investigation; and a select party, headed by an old monk of influence and reputation, waited on the Superior. They stated to him my abstraction, my mechanical movements, my automaton figure, my meanless words, my stupified devotion, my total alienation from the spirit of the monastic life, while my scrupulous, *wooden, jointless* exactness in its forms was only a mockery. The Superior heard them with great indifference. He had held secret intelligence with my family, had communicated with the Director, and pledged himself that I should be a monk.

He had succeeded by dint of exertions, (the result of which has been seen), and now cared very little whether I was mad or not. With a grave air he forbid their further interference in the matter, and reserved its future cognizance to himself. They retired defeated, but not disappointed, and they all pledged themselves to each other to *watch me;* that is, to harass, persecute, and torment me into being the very character with which their malice, their curiosity, or their mere industry of idleness and wantonness of unoccupied invention, had invested me already. From that hour the whole convent was in a tumult of conspiracy and combination. Doors were clapped to wherever I was heard to approach; and three or four would stand whispering near where I walked, and clear their throats, and exchange signs, and pass *audibly* to the most trifling topics in my hearing, as if to intimate, while they affected to conceal it, that their last topic had been *me.* I laugh-

ed at this internally. I said to myself, "Poor perverted beings, with what affectation of dramatic bustle and contrivance you labour to diversify the misery of your hopeless vacancy;—you struggle,—I submit." Soon the toils they were preparing began to tighten round me. They would throw themselves in my way with an assiduity I could not avoid, and an appearance of kindness I did not willingly repel. They would say, in the blandest tones, "My dear brother, you are melancholy,—you are devoured with chagrin,—would to God our fraternal efforts could banish your regrets. But from what arises that melancholy that appears to consume you?" At these words I could not help fixing on them eyes full of reproaches, and I believe of tears,—but I did not utter a word. The state in which they saw me, was a sufficient cause for the melancholy with which I was reproached. * *

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"This attack having failed, another me-

thod was tried. They attempted to make me a party in the parties of the convent. They told me a thousand things of unjust partialities,—of unjust punishments, daily to be witnessed in the convent. They talked of a sickly brother being compelled to attend matins, while the physician pronounced his attendance on them must be his death, —*and he died*,—while a young favourite, in the bloom of health, had a dispensation from matins whenever he pleased to lie till nine in the morning;—of complaints that the confessional was not attended to as it ought,—and this might have made some impression on me, till another complainant added, and the *turning-box is not attended to as it ought to be.* This union of dissonant sounds,—this startling transition from a complaint of neglecting the mysteries of the soul in its profoundest communion with God, to the lowest details of the abuses of conventual discipline, revolted me at once. I had with difficulty concealed my disgust till then, and it was now so

obvious, that the *party* gave up their attempt for the moment, and beckoned to an *experienced* monk to join me in my solitary walk, as I broke from them. He approached, "My brother, you are alone." "I wish to be so." "But why?" "I am not obliged to announce my reasons." "True, but you may confide them to me." "I have nothing to confide." "I know that,—I would not for the world intrude on your confidence; reserve that for friends more honoured." It struck me as rather odd, that he should, in the same breath, ask for my confidence,—declare that he was conscious I had nothing to intrust to him,—and, lastly, request a reserve of my confidence for some more favoured friend. I was silent, however, till he said, "But, my brother, you are devoured with ennui." I was silent still. "Would to God I could find the means to dissipate it." I said, looking on him calmly, "Are those means to be found within the walls of a convent?"

"Yes, my dear brother,—yes, certainly,—the debate in which the convent is now engaged about the proper hour for matins, which the Superior wants to have restored to the original hour." "What is the difference?" "*Full five minutes.*" "I confess the importance of the question." "Oh! if you once begin to feel it, there will be no end of your happiness in a convent. There is something every moment to inquire, to be anxious about, and to contend for. Interest yourself, my dear brother, in these questions, and you will not have a moment's ennui to complain of." At these words I fixed my eyes on him. I said calmly, but I believe emphatically, "I have, then, only to excite in my own mind, spleen, malignity, curiosity, every passion that your retreat should have afforded me protection against, to render that retreat supportable. Pardon me, if I cannot, like you, beg of God permission to take his enemy into compact against the corruption which I promote, while I presume to

pray against it." He was silent, lifted up his hands, and crossed himself; and I said to myself, "God forgive your hypocrisy," as he went into another walk, and repeated to his companions, "He is mad, irrecoverably mad." "But how, then?" said several voices. There was a stifled whisper. I saw several heads bent together. I did not know what they were meditating, nor did I care. I was walking alone,—it was a delicious moon-light evening. I saw the moon-beams through the trees, but the trees all looked to me like walls. Their trunks were as adamant, and the interlaced branches seemed to twine themselves into folds that said, "Beyond us there is no passing." I sat down by the side of a fountain,—there was a tall poplar over it,—I remember their situation well. An elderly priest (who, I did not see, was detached by the party) sat down beside me. He began some common-place observations on the transiency of human existence. I shook my head, and he understood, by a

kind of tact not uncommon among Jesuits, that *it would not do.* He shifted the subject, remarked on the beauty of the foliage, and the limpid purity of the fountain. I assented. He added, "Oh that life were pure as that stream!" I sighed, "Oh that life were verdant and fertile to me as that tree!" "But, my son, may not fountains be dried up, and trees be withered?" "Yes, my father,—yes,—the fountain of my life has been dried up, and the green branch of my life has been blasted for ever." As I uttered these words, I could not suppress some tears. The father seized on what he called the moment when God was breathing on my soul. Our conversation was very long, and I listened to him with a kind of reluctant and stubborn attention, because I had involuntarily been compelled to observe, that he was the only person in the whole community who had never harassed me by the slightest importunity either before my profession or after; and when the worst things were said of me,

never seemed to attend; and when the worst things were predicted of me, shook his head and said nothing. His character was unimpeached, and his religious performances as exemplary and punctual as my own. With all this I felt no confidence in him, or in any human being; but I listened to him with patience, and my patience must have had no trivial trial, for, at the end of an hour, (I did not perceive that our conference was permitted quite beyond the usual hour of retirement), he continued repeating, "My dear son, you will become reconciled to the conventual life." "My father, never, never,—unless this fountain is dried up, and this tree withered, by to-morrow." "My son, God has often performed greater miracles for the salvation of a soul."

"We parted, and I retired to my cell. I know not how he and the others were employed, but, before matins, there was such a tumult in the convent, that one would have thought Madrid was on fire. Boarders, novices, and monks, ran about

from cell to cell, up and down the staircase, through all the corridors, unrestrained and unquestioned,—all order was at an end. No bell was rung, no commands for restoring tranquillity issued; the voice of authority seemed to have made peace for ever with the shouts of uproar. From my window I saw them running through the garden in every direction, embracing each other, ejaculating, praying, and counting their beads with hands tremulous, and eyes uplifted in extacy. The hilarity of a convent has something in it uncouth, unnatural, and even alarming. I suspected some mischief immediately, but I said to myself, "The worst is over, they cannot make me more than a monk."—I was not long left in doubt. Many steps approached my cell, numerous voices were repeating, "Hasten, dear brother, hasten to the garden." I was left no choice; they surrounded and almost bore me to the garden.

"The whole community were assembled there, the Superior among them not attempting to suppress the confusion, but

rather encouraging it. There was a suffusion of joy in every countenance, and a kind of artificial light in every eye, but the whole performance struck me as hollow and hypocritical. I was led, or rather hurried to the spot where I had sat and conversed so long the preceding evening. *The fountain was dried up, and the tree was withered.* I stood speechless with astonishment, while every voice around me repeated, "A miracle! a miracle!—God himself has sealed your vocation with his own hand." The Superior made a signal to them to stop. He said to me in a calm voice, "My son, you are required only to believe the evidence of your own eyes. Will you make infidels of your very senses, sooner than believe God? Prostrate yourself, I adjure you, before him this moment, and, by a public and solemn act of faith, recognise that mercy that has not scrupled a miracle to invite you to salvation." I was amazed more than touched by what I saw and heard, but I threw myself on my knees before them all, as I was

directed. I clasped my hands, and said aloud, " My God, if you have indeed vouchsafed this miracle on my account, you will also doubtless enrich and illuminate me with grace to apprehend and appreciate it. My mind is dark, but you can illuminate it. My heart is hard, but it is not beyond the power of omnipotence to touch and subdue it. An impression made on it this moment, a whisper sent to its recesses, is not less worthy of your mercy than an impression on inanimate matter, which only confounds my senses." The Superior interrupted me. He said, " Hold, those are not the words you should use. Your very faith is incredulous, and your prayer an ironical insult on the mercy it pretends to supplicate." " My father, put what words you please in my mouth, and I will repeat them,—if I am not convinced, I am at least subdued." " You must ask pardon of the community for the offence your *tacit* repugnance to the life of God has caused them." I did

so. "You must express your gratitude to the community for the joy they have testified at this miraculous evidence of the truth of your vocation." I did so. "You must also express your gratitude to God, for a visible interposition of supernatural power, not more to the vindication of his grace, than to the eternal honour of this house, which he has been pleased to irradiate and dignify by *a miracle*." I hesitated a little. I said, "My father, may I be permitted to utter this prayer internally?" The Superior hesitated too; he thought it might not be well to push matters too far, and he said at length, "As you please." I was still kneeling on the ground, close to the tree and the fountain. I now prostrated myself, with my face to the earth, and prayed internally and intensely, while they all stood around me; but the language of my prayer was very different from what they flattered themselves I was uttering. On rising from my knees, I was embraced by half the com-

munity. Some of them actually shed tears, the source of whose fountain was surely not in their hearts. Hypocritical joy insults only its dupe, but hypocritical grief degrades the professor. That whole day was passed in a kind of revelry. Exercises were abridged,—the refections embellished with confectionary,—every one had permission to go from cell to cell, without an order from the Superior. Presents of chocolate, snuff, iced water, liqueurs, and (what was more acceptable and necessary than any of them) napkins and towels of the finest and whitest damask, circulated among all the members. The Superior was shut up half the day with two *discreet* brethren, as they are called, (that is, men who are elected to take part with the Superior, on supposition of their utter, superannuated incapacity, as Pope Sixtus was elected for his (supposed) imbecillity), preparing an authenticated account of the miracle, to be dispatched to the principal convents in Spain. There was no need to

distribute the intelligence through Madrid, —they were in possession of it an hour after it happened,—the malicious say *an hour before.*

"I must confess the agitating exhilaration of this day, so unlike what I had ever witnessed before in a convent, produced an effect on me I cannot describe. I was caressed,—made the hero of the *fete*, —(a conventual fete has always something odd and unnatural in it),—almost deified. I gave myself up to the intoxication of the day,—I did verily believe myself the favourite of the Deity for some hours. I said to myself a thousand flattering things. If this deception was criminal, I expiated my crime very soon. The next day every thing was restored to its usual order, and I found that the community could pass from the extreme of disorder in a moment to the rigidity of their usual habits.

"My conviction of this was certainly not diminished within the few following days. The oscillations of a convent vi-

brate within a very short interval. One day all is relaxation, another all is inexorable discipline. Some following days I received a striking proof of that foundation on which, in despite of a miracle, my repugnance to a monastic life rested. Some one, it was said, had committed a slight breach of monastic duty. The *slight breach* was *fortunately* committed by a distant relation of the Archbishop of Toledo, and consisted *merely in his entering the church intoxicated,* (a rare vice in Spaniards), attempting to drag the matin preacher from the pulpit, and failing in that, getting astride as well as he could on the altar, dashing down the tapers, overturning the vases and the pix, and trying to scratch out, as with the talons of a demon, the painting that hung over the table, uttering all the while the most horrible blasphemies, and even *soliciting the portrait of the Virgin* in language not to be repeated. A consultation was held. The community, as may be

guessed, was in an uproar while it lasted. Every one but myself was anxious and agitated. There was much talk of the inquisition,—the scandal was so atrocious,—the outrage so unpardonable,—and atonement so impracticable. Three days afterwards the archbishop's mandate came to stop all proceedings; and the following day the youth who had committed this sacrilegious outrage appeared in the hall of the Jesuits, where the Superior and a few monks were assembled, read a short exercise which one of them had written for him on the pithy word "Ebrietas," and departed to take possession of a large benefice in the diocese of the archbishop his relative. The very next day after this scandalous scene of compromise, imposture, and profanation, a monk was detected in the act of going, after the permitted hour, to an adjacent cell to return a book he had borrowed. As a punishment for this offence, he was compelled to sit for three days at

refection, while we were dining, barefooted and his tunic reversed, on the stone floor of the hall. He was compelled to accuse himself aloud of every crime, and of many not at all fit to be mentioned to our ears, and exclaim at every interval, "My God, my punishment is just." On the second day, it was found that a mat had been placed under him by some merciful hand. There was an immediate commotion in the hall. The poor wretch was labouring under a complaint that made it worse than death to him to be compelled to sit or rather lie on a stone floor; some merciful being had surreptitiously conveyed to him this mat. An investigation was immediately commenced. A youth whom I had not noticed before, started from the table, and kneeling to the Superior, confessed *his guilt*. The Superior assumed a stern look, retired with some old monks to consult on this new crime of humanity, and in a few moments the bell was rung, to give every one notice to retire to their

cells. We all retired trembling, and while we prostrated ourselves respectively before the crucifix in our cells, wondered who would be the next victim, or what might be his punishment. I saw that youth but once again. He was the son of a wealthy and powerful family, but even his wealth was no balance against his contumacy, in the opinion of the convent, that is, of four monks of rigid principles, whom the Superior consulted that very evening. The Jesuits are fond of courting power, but they are still fonder of keeping it, if they can, to themselves. The result of their debate was, that the offender should undergo a severe humiliation and penance in their presence. His sentence was announced to him, and he submitted to it. He repeated every word of contrition they dictated to him. He then bared his shoulders, and applied the scourge till the blood flowed, repeating between every stroke, "My God, I ask pardon of thee for having given the slightest comfort or relief to

Fra Paolo, during his merited penance." He performed all this, cherishing in the bottom of his soul an intention still to comfort and relieve Fra Paolo, whenever he could find opportunity. He then thought all was over. He was desired to retire to his cell. He did so, but the monks were not satisfied with this examination. They had long suspected Fra Paolo of irregularity, and imagined they might extort the confession of it from this youth, whose humanity increased their suspicion. The virtues of nature are always deemed vices in a convent. Accordingly, he had hardly been in bed when they surrounded him. They told him they came by command of the Superior to enjoin him a further penance, unless he disclosed the secret of the interest he felt for Fra Paolo. It was in vain he exclaimed, "I have no interest but that of humanity and compassion." Those were words they did not understand. It was in vain he

urged, "I will inflict whatever penance the Superior is pleased to order, but my shoulders are bleeding still,"—and he shewed them. The executioners were pitiless. They compelled him to quit his bed, and applied the scourge with such outrageous severity, that at last, mad with shame, rage, and pain, he burst from them, and ran through the corridor calling for assistance or for mercy. The monks were in their cells, none dared to stir,—they shuddered, and turned on their straw pallets. It was the vigil of Saint John the Lesser, and I had been commanded what is called in convents an hour of recollection, which was to be passed in the church. I had obeyed the order, and remained with my face and body prostrate on the marble steps of the altar, till I was almost unconscious, when I heard the clock strike twelve. I reflected the hour had elapsed without a single recollection on my part. "And thus it is to be always," I exclaimed, rising from my knees; "they deprive

of the power of thinking, and then they bid me recollect." As I returned through the corridor, I heard frightful cries—I shuddered. Suddenly a phantom approached me—I dropt on my knees—I cried, " Satana vade retro—apage Satana." A naked human being, covered with blood, and uttering screams of rage and torture, flashed by me; four monks pursued him—they had lights. I had shut the door at the end of the gallery—I felt they must return and pass me—I was still on my knees, and trembling from head to foot. The victim reached the door, found it shut, and rallied. I turned, and saw a groupe worthy of Murillo. A more perfect human form never existed than that of this unfortunate youth. He stood in an attitude of despair—he was streaming with blood. The monks, with their lights, their scourges, and their dark habits, seemed like a groupe of demons who had made prey of a wandering angel,—the groupe resembled the infernal furies pursuing

a mad Orestes. And, indeed, no ancient sculptor ever designed a figure more exquisite and perfect than that they had so barbarously mangled. Debilitated as my mind was by the long slumber of all its powers, this spectacle of horror and cruelty woke them in a moment. I rushed forward in his defence—I struggled with the monks—I uttered some expressions which, though I hardly was conscious of, they remembered and exaggerated with all the accuracy of malice.

"I have no recollection of what followed; but the issue of the business was, that I was confined to my cell for the following week, for my daring interference in the discipline of the convent. And the additional penance of the unfortunate novice, for resisting that discipline, was inflicted with such severity, that he became delirious with shame and agony. He refused food, he got no rest, and died the eighth night after the scene I had witnessed. He was

of a temper unusually mild and amiable—he had a taste for literature, and even the disguise of a convent could not conceal the distinguished graces of his person and manners. Had he lived in the world, how these qualities would have embellished it! Perhaps the world would have abused and perverted them—true; but would the abuses of the world ever have brought them to so frightful and disastrous a conclusion?—would he have been first lashed into madness, and then lashed out of existence? He was interred in the church of the convent, and the Superior himself pronounced his eulogium—the Superior! by whose order, or else permission, or at least connivance, he had been driven mad, in order to obtain a trivial and imaginary secret.

"During this exhibition, my disgust arose to a degree incalculable. I had loathed the conventual life—I now despised it; and every judge of human nature knows, that it is harder to eradicate the latter sen-

timent than the former. I was not long without an occasion for the renewed exercise of both feelings. The weather was intensely hot that year—an epidemic complaint broke out in the convent—every day two or three were ordered to the infirmary, and those who had merited slight penances were allowed, by way of commutation, to attend the sick. I was most anxious to be of the number—I was even resolved, by some slight deviation, to tempt this punishment, which would have been to me the highest gratification. Dare I confess my motive to you, Sir? I was anxious to see those men, if possible, divested of the conventual disguise, and forced to sincerity by the pangs of disease, and the approach of death. I triumphed already in the idea of their dying confession, of hearing them acknowledge the seductions employed to ensnare me, deplore the miseries in which they had involved me, and implore, with convulsed lips, my pardon in—*no—not in vain.*

" This wish, though vindictive, was not without its palliations; but I was soon saved the trouble of realizing it at my own expence. That very evening the Superior sent for me, and desired me to attend in the infirmary, allowing me, at the same time, remission from vespers. The first bed I approached, I found Fra Paolo extended on. He had never recovered the effects of the complaint he laboured under at the time of his penance; and the death of the young novice so (fruitlessly incurred) had been mortal to him.

" I offered him medicines—I attempted to adjust him in his bed. He had been greatly neglected. He repelled both offers, and, feebly waving his hand, said, " Let me, at least, die in peace." A few moments after, he unclosed his eyes, and recognized me. A gleam of pleasure trembled over his countenance, for he remembered the interest I had shewn for his unfortunate friend. He said, in a voice hardly intelligible, " It is you, then?"

"Yes, my brother, it is I—can I do any thing for you?" After a long pause, he added, "Yes, you can." "Tell me then." He lowered his voice, which was before almost inaudible, and whispered, "Let none of them come near me in my dying moments—it will not give you much trouble—those moments are approaching." I pressed his hand in token of acquiescence. But I felt there was something at once terrifying and improper in this request from a dying man. I said to him, "My dear brother, you are then dying?—would you not wish an interest in the prayers of the community?—would you not wish the benefit of the last sacraments?" He shook his head, and I fear that I understood him too well. I ceased any further importunity; and a few moments he uttered, in tones I could hardly distinguish, "*Let them, let me die.*—They have left me no power to form another wish." His eyes closed,—I sat beside his bed, holding his hand in mine. At first, I could feel he at-

tempted to press it—the attempt failed, his hold relaxed. Fra Paolo was no more.

"I continued to sit holding the dead hand in mine, till a groan from an adjacent bed roused me. It was occupied by the old monk with whom I had held a long conversation the night before the miracle, in which I still believed most firmly.

"I have observed, that this man was of a temper and manners remarkably mild and attractive. Perhaps this is always connected with great weakness of intellect, and coldness of character *in men*. (It may be different in women—but my own experience has never failed in the discovery, that where there was a kind of feminine softness and pliability in the male character, there was also treachery, dissimulation, and heartlessness.) At least, if there be such an union, a conventual life is sure to give it every advantage in its range of internal debility, and external seductiveness.—That pretence of a wish to assist, without the power, or even the wish,

that is so flattering both to the weak minds that exercise it, and the weaker on whom it is exercised. This man had been always judged very weak, and yet very fascinating. He had been always employed to ensnare the young novices. He was now dying—overcome by his situation, I forgot every thing but its tremendous claims, and offered him every assistance in my power. "I want nothing but to die," was his answer. His countenance was perfectly calm, but its calmness was rather that of apathy than of resignation. "You are, then, perfectly sure of your approach to blessedness?" "I know nothing about it." "How, my brother, are those words for a dying man to utter?" "Yes, if he speaks the truth." "But a monk?—a catholic?" "Those are but names—I feel *that truth*, at least, now." "You amaze me!" "I care not—I am on the verge of a precipice—I must plunge from it—and whether the by-standers utter outcries or not, is a matter of little conse-

quence to me." "And yet, you expressed a willingness to die?" "Willingness! Oh impatience!—I am a clock that has struck the same minutes and hours for sixty years. Is it not time for the machine to long for its winding up? The monotony of my existence would make a transition, even to pain, desirable. I am weary, and would change—that is all." "But to me, and to all the community, you seemed to be resigned to the monastic life." "I seemed a lie—I lived a lie—I was a lie—I ask pardon of my last moments for speaking the truth—I presume they neither can refuse me, or discredit my words—I hated the monastic life. Inflict pain on man, and his energies are roused—condemn him to insanity, and he slumbers like animals that have been found inclosed in wood and stone, torpid and content; but condemn him at once to pain and inanity, as they do in convents, and you unite the sufferings of hell and of annihilation. For sixty years I have cursed my

existence. I never woke to hope, for I had nothing to do or to expect. I never lay down with consolation, for I had, at the close of every day, only to number so many deliberate mockeries of God, as exercises of devotion. The moment life is put beyond the reach of your will, and placed under the influence of mechanical operations, it becomes, to thinking beings, a torment insupportable.

"I never ate with appetite, because I knew, that with or without it, I must go to the refectory when the bell rung. I never lay down to rest in peace, because I knew the bell was to summon me in defiance of nature, whether it was disposed to prolong or shorten my repose. I never prayed, for my prayers were dictated to me. I never hoped, for my hopes were founded not on the truth of God, but on the promises and threatenings of man. My salvation hovered on the breath of a being as weak as myself, whose weakness I was nevertheless obliged to flatter, and struggle

to obtain a gleam of the grace of God, through the dark distorted medium of the vices of man. *It never reached me*—I die without light, hope, faith, or consolation."—He uttered these words with a calmness that was more terrific than the wildest convulsions of despair. I gasped for breath—"But, my brother, you were always punctual in your religious exercises." "That was mechanism—will you not believe a dying man?" "But you urged me, in a long conversation, to embrace the monastic life; and your importunity must have been sincere, for it was after my profession." "It is natural for the miserable to wish for companions in their misery. This is very selfish, very misanthropic, you will say, but it is also very natural. You have yourself seen the cages suspended in the cells—are not the tame birds always employed to allure the wild ones? We were caged birds, can you blame us for the deception?" In these words I could not help recognizing that

simplicity of profound corruption *,—that frightful paralysis of the soul, which leaves it incapable of receiving any impression or making one,—that says to the accuser, Approach, remonstrate, upbraid—I defy you. My conscience is dead, and can neither hear, utter, or echo a reproach. I was amazed—I struggled against my own conviction. I said, "But your regularity in religious exercises—" "*Did you never hear a bell toll?*" "But your voice was always the loudest and most distinct in the choir." "*Did you never hear an organ played?*" * * *

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I shuddered, yet I still went on with my queries—I thought I could not know too much. I said, "But, my brother, the religious exercises in which you were constantly engaged, must have imperceptibly instilled something of their spirit into you?—is it not so? You must have passed

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* Vide Madame Genlis's "Julien Delmour."

from the forms of religion into its spirit ultimately?—is it not so, my brother? Speak on the faith of a dying man. May I have such a hope! I would undergo any thing—any thing, to obtain it." "There is no such hope," said the dying man, "deceive not yourself with it. The repetition of religious duties, without the feeling or spirit of religion, produces an incurable callosity of heart. There are not more irreligious people to be found on earth than those who are occupied always in its *externals*. I verily believe half our lay-brothers to be Atheists. I have heard and read something of those whom we call heretics. They have people to open their pews, (shocking profanation you will call it, to sell seats in the house of God, and you are right), they have people to ring bells when their dead are to be interred; and these wretches have no other indication of religion to give, but watching during the whole time of service, (in which their duties forbid them to partake), for

the fees which they extort, and dropping upon their knees, ejaculating the names of Christ and God, amid the rattling of the pew-doors, which always operates on their associations, and makes them bound from their knees to gape for a hundredth part of the silver for which Judas sold his Saviour and himself. Then their bell-ringers —one would imagine *death might humanize them.* Oh! no such thing—they *extort money in proportion to the depth of the grave.* And the bell-ringer, the sexton, and the survivors, fight sometimes a manual battle over the senseless remains, whose torpidity is the most potent and silent reproach to this unnatural conflict." I knew nothing of this, but I grasped at his former words, "You die, then, without hope or confidence?" He was silent. "Yet you urged me by eloquence almost divine, by a miracle verified before my own eyes." He laughed. There is something very horrible in the laugh of a dying man: Hovering on the verge of both worlds, he

seems to give the lie to both, and proclaim the enjoyments of one, and the hopes of another, alike an imposture. "I performed that miracle myself," he said with all the calmness, and, alas! something of the triumph of a deliberate impostor. "I knew the reservoir by which the fountain was supplied—by consent of the Superior it was drawn off in the course of the night. We worked hard at it, and laughed at your credulity every pump we drew." "But the tree—" "I was in possession of some chemical secrets—I have not time to disclose them now—I scattered a certain fluid over the leaves of the poplar that night, and they *appeared* withered by the morning—go look at them a fortnight hence, and you will see them as green as ever." "And these are your dying words?" "They are." "And why did you deceive me thus?" He struggled a short time at this question, and then rising almost upright in his bed, exclaimed, "Because I was a monk, and wished for victims of my imposture to gra-

tify my pride! and companions of my misery, to soothe its malignity!" He was convulsed as he spoke, the natural mildness and calmness of his physiognomy were changed for something that I cannot describe—something at once derisive, triumphant, and diabolical. I forgave him every thing in that horrible moment. I snatched a crucifix that lay by his bed—I offered it to his lips. He pushed it away. "If I wanted to have this farce acted, I should choose another actor. You know I might have the Superior and half the convent at my bed-side this moment if I pleased, with their tapers, their holy water, and their preparations for extreme unction, and all the masquerade of death, by which they try to dupe even the dying, and insult God even on the threshold of his own eternal mansion. I suffered you to sit beside me, because I thought, from your repugnance to the monastic life, you might be a willing hearer of its deceptions, and its despair."

" Deplorable as had been the image of that life to me before, this representation exceeded my imagination. I had viewed it as excluding all the enjoyments of life, and thought the prospect blasting; but now the other world was weighed in the balance, and found wanting. The genius of monasticism seemed to wield a two-edged sword, and to lift it between and against time and eternity. The blade bore a two-fold inscription—on the side next the world was written the word " suffer," —on that opposed to eternity, " despair." In the utter hopelessness of my soul, I still continued to question *him* for hope—him! while he was bereaving me of its very shadow, by every word he uttered. " But, must all be plunged in this abyss of darkness? Is there no light, no hope, no refuge, for the sufferer? May not some of us become reconciled to our situation—first patient of it, then attached to it? Finally, may we not (if our repugnance be invincible) make a merit of it with God, and offer

to him the sacrifice of our earthly hopes and wishes, in the confidence of an ample and glorious equivalent? Even if we are unable to offer this sacrifice with the unction which would ensure its acceptance, still may we not hope it will not be wholly neglected?—that we may become tranquil, if not happy—resigned, if not content. Speak, tell me if this may be?"

"And you wish to extort deception from the lips of death—but you will fail. Hear your doom—Those who are possessed of what may be called the religious character, that is, those who are visionary, weak, morose, and ascetic, may elevate themselves to a species of intoxication in the moments of devotion. They may, while clasping the images, work themselves into the delusion, that the dead stone thrills to their touch; that the figures move, assent to their petitions, and turn their lifeless eyes on them with an expression of benignity. They may, while kissing the crucifix, believe that they

hear celestial voices pronouncing their pardon; that the Saviour of the world extends his arms to them, to invite them to beatitude; that all heaven is expanded to their view, and the harmonies of paradise are enriched to glorify their apotheosis. But this is a mere inebriation that the most ignorant physician could produce in his patients by certain medicines. The secret of this ecstatic swoon might be traced to an apothecary's shop, or purchased at a cheaper rate. The inhabitants of the north of Europe procure this state of exaltation by the use of liquid fire—the Turks by opium—the Dervises by dancing—and Christian monks by spiritual pride operating on the exhaustion of a macerated frame. It is all intoxication, with this difference only, that the intoxication of men of this world produces always *self*-complacency—that of men of the other world, a complacency whose supposed source is derived from God. The intoxication is, therefore, more profound, more

delusive, and more dangerous. But nature, violated by these excesses, exacts a most usurious interest for this illicit indulgence. She makes them pay for moments of rapture with hours of despair. Their precipitation from extasy to horror is almost instantaneous. In the course of a few moments, they pass from being the favourites of Heaven to becoming its outcasts. They doubt the truth of their raptures,—the truth of their vocation. They doubt every thing—the sincerity of their prayers, even the efficacy of the Saviour's atonement, and the intercession of the blessed Virgin. They plunge from paradise to hell. They howl, they scream, they blaspheme. From the bottom of the infernal gulph in which they imagine themselves plunged, they bellow imprecations against their Creator—they denounce themselves as damned from all eternity for their sins, while their only sin is their inability to support preternatural excitement. The paroxysm ceases they

become the elect of God again in their own imaginations. And to those who interrogate them with regard to their late despair, they answer, That Satan was permitted to buffet them—that they were under the hidings of God's face, &c. All saints, from Mahomet down to Francis Xavier, were only a compound of insanity, pride, and self-imposition;—the latter would have been of less consequence, but that men always revenge their imposition on themselves, by imposing to the utmost on others."

"There is no more horrible state of mind than that in which we are *forced by conviction to listen on, wishing every word to be false, and knowing every word to be true.* Such was mine, but I tried to palliate it by saying, "It was never my ambition to be a saint; but is the lot of all, then, so deplorable?" The monk, who appeared to rejoice in this opportunity to discharge the concentrated malignity of sixty years of suffering and hypocrisy,

collected his dying voice to answer. He seemed as if he never could inflict enough, for what had been inflicted on himself. "Those who possess strong sensibility, without the religious character, are of all others the most unhappy, but their miseries are soonest terminated. They are harassed by trivial constraints, stupified by monotonous devotion, exasperated by dull insolence and bloated superiority. They struggle, they resist. Penance and punishment are applied. Their own violence justifies increased violence of treatment; and, at all events, it would be applied without this justification, for there is nothing that delights the pride of power, more than a victorious strife with the pride of intellect. The remainder is easily to be conceived by you, who have witnessed it. You saw the unfortunate youth who interfered about Paolo. He was lashed to madness. Tortured first to phrenzy, then to stupefaction,—he died! I was the secret, unsuspected adviser of the whole

proceeding." "Monster!" I exclaimed, for truth had made us equal *now*, and even precluded the language that humanity would dictate when uttered to a dying man.—"But why?"—said he, with that calmness which had once attracted, and now revolted me, but which had at all times undisputed possession of his physiognomy;—"his sufferings were shorter, do you blame me for diminishing their duration?"—There was something cold, ironical, and jeering, even in the suavity of this man, that gave a certain force to his simplest observations. It seemed as if he had reserved the truth all his life, to utter it at his dying hour. "Such is the fate of those who possess strong sensibility; those who have less languish away in an imperceptible decline. They spend their time in watching a few flowers, in tending birds. They are punctual in their religious exercises, they receive neither blame or praise,—they melt away in torpor and ennui. They wish for death, as the prepa-

ration it might put the convent to might produce a short excitement, but they are disappointed, for their state forbids excitement, and they die as they have lived,—unexcited, unawakened. The tapers are lit, they do not see them,—the unction is applied, they do not feel it,—prayers are uttered, they cannot partake in them;—in fact, the whole drama is acted, but the principal performer is absent,—is gone. Others indulge themselves in perpetual reverie. They walk alone in the cloister,—in the garden. They feed themselves with the poison of delicious, innutritive illusion. They dream that an earthquake will shake the walls to atoms, that a volcano will burst forth in the centre of the garden. They imagine a revolution of government,—an attack of banditti,—any thing, however improbable. Then they take refuge in the possibility of a fire, (if a fire bursts out in a convent, the doors are thrown open, and "Sauve qui peut," is the word). At this thought they con-

ceive the most ardent hope,—they could rush out,—they could precipitate themselves into the streets, into the country,—in fact, they would fly any where to escape. Then these hopes fail,—they begin to get nervous, morbid, restless. If they have interest, they are indulged with remission from their duties, and they remain in their cells, relaxed,—torpid,—idiotical; if they have not interest, they are forced to the punctual performance of their duties, and then idiotism comes on much sooner, as diseased horses, employed in a mill, become blind sooner than those who are suffered to wear out existence in ordinary labour. Some of them take refuge in religion, as they call it. They call for relief on the Superior, but what can the Superior do? He is but human too, and perhaps feels the despair that is devouring the wretches who supplicate him to deliver them from it. Then they prostrate themselves before the images of the saints,—they invoke, they some-

times revile them. They call for their intercession, deplore its inefficacy, and fly to some other, whose merits they imagine are higher in the sight of God. They supplicate for an interest in the intercession of Christ and the Virgin, as their last resort. That resort fails them too,—the Virgin herself is inexorable, though they wear out her pedestal with their knees, and her feet with their kisses. Then they go about the galleries at night, they rouse the sleepers, they knock at every door,—they cry, "Brother Saint Jerome, pray for me,—Brother Saint Augustine, pray for me." Then the placard is seen fastened to the rails of the altar, "Dear brothers, pray for the wandering soul of a monk." The next day the placard bears this inscription, "The prayers of the community are implored for a monk who is in despair." Then they find human intercession as unavailing as divine, to procure them a remission of the sufferings which, while *their profession* continues to inflict on

them, no power can reverse or mitigate. They crawl to their cells,—in a few days the toll of the bell is heard, and the brethren exclaim, "He died in the odour of sanctity," and hasten to spread their snares for another victim." "And is this, then, monastic life?" "It is,—there are but two exceptions, that of those who can every day renew, by the aid of imagination, the hope of escape, and who cherish that hope even on their dying bed; and those who, like me, diminish their misery by dividing it, and, like the spider, feel relieved of the poison that swells, and would burst them, by instilling a drop of it into every insect that toils, agonizes, and perishes in their net,—*like you.*" At these last words, a glare of malignity flashed on the features of the dying wretch, that appalled me. I retreated from his bed for a moment. I returned, I looked at him,—his eyes were closed,—his hands extended. I touched him,—raised him,—he was dead,—those were his last words. The expression of

his features was the physiognomy of his soul,—they were calm and pale, but still a cold expression of derision lingered about the curve of his lips.

"I rushed from the infirmary. I was at that time indulged, like all the other visitants of the sick, to go to the garden beyond the allotted hours, perhaps to diminish the chance of infection. I was but too ready to avail myself of this permission. The garden, with its calm moonlight beauty, its innocence of heaven, its theology of the stars, was at once a reproach and a consolation to me. I tried to reflect, to feel,—both efforts failed; and perhaps it is in this silence of the soul, this suspension of all the clamorous voices of the passions, that we are most ready to hear the voice of God. My imagination suddenly represented to me the august and ample vault above me as a church,—the images of the saints grew dim in my eyes as I gazed on the stars, and even the altar, over which the crucifixion of the Saviour of the world

was represented, turned pale to the eye of the soul, as I gazed on the moon "walking in her brightness." I fell on my knees. I knew not to whom I was about to pray, but I never felt so disposed to pray. I felt my habit touched at this moment. I at first trembled, from the idea of being detected in a forbidden act. I started up. A dark figure stood beside me, who said in indistinct and faultering tones, "Read this," and he thrust a paper into my hand; "I have worn it sewed into my habit for four days. I have watched you night and day. I had no opportunity but this,—you were in your cell, in the choir, or in the infirmary. Tear it in pieces, throw the fragments into the fountain, or *swallow them*, the moment you have read it.—Adieu. I have risked every thing for you," and he glided away. I recognized his figure as he departed; it was the porter of the convent. I well understood the risk he must have run in delivering this paper, for it

was the regulation of the convent, that all letters, whether addressed to or written by boarders, novices, or monks, were first to be read by the Superior, and I never knew an instance of its infringement. The moon gave me sufficient light. I began to read, while a vague hope, that had neither object or basis, trembled at the bottom of my heart. The paper contained these words:

"My dearest brother, (my God! how I started!) I see you revolt at the first lines which I address to you,—I implore you, for both our sakes, to read them with calmness and attention. We have been both the victims of parental and priestly imposition; the former we must forgive, for our parents are the victims of it too. The Director has their consciences in his hand, and their destiny and ours at his feet. Oh, my brother, what a tale have I to disclose to you! I was brought up, by the Director's orders, whose influence over the domestics is as unbounded as it is over

their unhappy master, in complete hostility against you, as one who was depriving me of my natural rights, and degrading the family by your illegitimate intrusion. May not this palliate, in some degree, my unnatural repulsiveness when we first met? I was taught from my cradle to hate and fear you,—to hate you as an enemy, and fear you as an impostor. This was the Director's plan. He thought the hold he had over my father and mother too slight to gratify his ambition of domestic power, or realize his hopes of professional distinction. The basis of all ecclesiastical power rests upon fear. A crime must be discovered or invented. The vague reports circulated in the family, my mother's constant dejection, my father's occasional agitation, offered him a clue, which he followed with incessant industry through all its windings of doubt, mystery, and disappointment, till, in a moment of penitence, my mother, terrified by his constant denunciations if she concealed any secret

of her heart or life from him, disclosed the truth.

"We were both infants then. He adopted immediately the plan he has since realized at the expence of all but himself. I am convinced he had not, from the first hour of his machinations, the least malignity against you. The aggrandizement of his interest, which ecclesiastics always individualize with that of the church, was his only object. To dictate, to tyrannize, to manage a whole family, and that of rank, by his knowledge of the frailty of one of its members, was all he looked to. Those who by their vows are excluded from the interest which natural affections give us in life, must seek for it in the artificial ones of pride and domination, and the Director found it there. All thenceforth was conducted and inspired by him. It was he who caused us to be kept asunder from our infancy, fearful that nature might frustrate his plans,—it was he who reared me in sentiments of implacable ani-

mosity against you. When my mother fluctuated, he reminded her of her vow, with which she had rashly intrusted him. When my father murmured, the shame of my mother's frailty, the bitter feuds of domestic discussion, the tremendous sounds of imposture, perjury, sacrilege, and the resentment of the church, were thundered in his ears. You may conceive there is nothing this man would shrink at, when, almost in my childhood, he disclosed to me my mother's frailty, to insure my early and zealous participation in his views. Heaven blast the wretch who could thus contaminate the ears, and wither the heart of a child, with the tale of a parent's shame, to secure a partizan for the church! This was not all. From the first hour I was able to hear and comprehend him, he poisoned my heart by every channel he could approach. He exaggerated my mother's partiality for you, which he assured me often contended vainly with her conscience. He

represented my father as weak and dissipated, but affectionate; and, with the natural pride of a boy-father, immoveably attached to his eldest offspring. He said, "My son, prepare yourself to struggle with a host of prejudices,—the interests of God, as well as of society, demand it. *Assume a high tone with your parents*,—you are in possession of the secret that corrodes their consciences, make your own use of it." Judge the effect of these words on a temper naturally violent,—words, too, uttered by one whom I was taught to regard as the agent of the Divinity.

"All this time, as I have since been informed, he was debating in his own mind whether he would not adopt your part instead of mine, or at least vacillate between both, so as to augment his influence over our parents, by the additional feature of suspicion. Whatever influenced his determination, the effect of his lessons on me may be easily calculated. I became restless, jealous, and vindictive;—insolent

to my parents, and suspicious of all around me. Before I was eleven years of age I reviled my father for his partiality to you, —I insulted my mother with her crime,— I tyrannized over the domestics,—I was the dread and the torment of the whole household; and the wretch who had made me thus a premature demon, had outraged nature, and compelled me to trample on every tie he should have taught me to hallow and cherish, consoled himself with the thought that he was obeying the calls of his function, and strengthening the hands of the church.

"Scire volunt secreta domus et inde timeri."

"On the day preceding our first meeting, (which had not been intended before), the Director went to my father; he said, "Senhor, I think it best the brothers should meet. Perhaps God may touch their hearts, and by his merciful influence over them, enable you to reverse the de-

cree that threatens one of them with seclusion, and both with a cruel and final separation." My father assented with tears of delight. Those tears did not melt the heart of the Director; he hastened to my apartment, and said, "My child, summon all your resolution, your artful, cruel, partial parents, are *preparing a scene* for you,—they are determined on introducing you to your spurious brother." "I will spurn him before their faces, if they dare to do so," said I, with the pride of premature tyranny. "No, my child, that will not do, you must appear to comply with their wishes, but you must not be their victim,—promise me that, my dear child,—promise me resolution and dissimulation." "I promise you resolution, keep the dissimulation for yourself." "Well, I will do so, since your interests require it." He hurried back to my father. "Senhor, I have employed all the eloquence of heaven and nature with your younger son. He is softened,—he melts already,—he

longs to precipitate himself into the fraternal embrace, and hear your benediction poured over the united hearts and bodies of your two children,—they are both your children. You must banish all prejudices, and——" "I have no prejudices!" said my poor father; "let me but see my children embrace, and if Heaven summoned me at that moment, I should obey it by dying of joy."—The Director reproved him for the expressions which gushed from his heart, and, wholly unmoved by them, hurried back to me, full of his commission. "My child, I have warned you of the conspiracy formed against you by your own family. You will receive a proof of it to-morrow,—your brother is to be introduced,—you will be required to embrace him,—your consent is reckoned on, but at the moment you do so, your father is resolved to interpret this as the signal, on your part, of the resignation of all your natural rights. Comply with your hypocritical parents, embrace this brother, but

give an air of repugnance to the action that will justify your conscience, while it deceives those who would deceive you. Watch the signal-word, my dear child; embrace him as you would a serpent,—his art is not less, and his poison as deadly. Remember that your resolution will decide the event of this meeting. Assume the appearance of affection, but remember you hold your deadliest enemy in your arms." At these words, unnatural as I was, I shuddered. I said, "My brother!" "Never mind," said the Director, "he is the enemy of God,—an illegitimate impostor. Now, my child, are you prepared?" and I answered, "I am prepared." That night, however, I was very restless. I required the Director to be summoned. I said in my pride, "But how is this poor wretch (meaning you) to be disposed of?" "Let him embrace the monastic life," said the Director. At these words I felt an interest on your account I had never recognized before. I said decidedly, for he

had taught me to assume a tone of decision, "He shall never be a monk." The Director appeared staggered, yet he trembled before the spirit he had himself raised. "Let him go into the army," I said; "let him inlist as a common soldier, I can supply him with the means of promotion; —let him engage in the meanest profession, I shall not blush to acknowledge him, but, father, he shall never be a monk." "But, my dear child, on what foundation does this extraordinary objection rest? It is the only means to restore peace to the family, and procure it for the unfortunate being for whom you are so much interested." "My father, have done with this language. Promise me, as the condition of my obedience to your wishes to-morrow, that my brother shall never be compelled to be a monk." "Compelled, my dear child! there can be no compulsion in a holy vocation." "I am not certain of that; but I demand from you the promise I have mentioned." The

Director hesitated, at last he said, "I promise." And he hastened to tell my father there was no longer any opposition to our meeting, and that I was delighted with the determination which had been announced to me of my brother eagerly embracing the monastic life. Thus was our first meeting arranged. When, at the command of my father, our arms were entwined, I swear to you, my brother, I felt them thrill with affection. But the instinct of nature was soon superseded by the force of habit, and I recoiled, collected all the forces of nature and passion in the terrible expression that I dared to direct towards our parents, while the Director stood behind them smiling, and encouraging me by gestures. I thought I had acted my part with applause, at least I gave myself enough, and retired from the scene with as proud a step as if I had trampled on a prostrate world,—I had only trampled on nature and my own heart. A few days after I was sent to a convent.

The Director was alarmed at the dogmatizing tone he himself had taught me to assume, and he urged the necessity of my education being attended to. My parents complied with every thing he required. I, for a wonder, consented; but, as the carriage conveyed me to the convent, I repeated to the Director, "Remember, my brother is not to be a monk."

"(After these lines several were unintelligible to me, apparently from the agitation under which they were written;—the precipitancy and fiery ardor of my brother's character communicated itself to his writings. After many a defaced page I could trace the following words.) * *

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"It was singular enough that you, who were the object of my inveterate hatred before my residence in the convent, became the object of my interest from that moment. I had adopted your cause from pride, I now upheld it from experience. Compassion, instinct, whatever it was, be-

gan to assume the character of a duty. When I saw the indignity with which the lower classes were treated, I said to myself, "No, he shall never suffer that,—he is my brother." When I succeeded in my exercises, and was applauded, I said, "This is applause in which he never can share." When I was punished, and that was much more frequently, I said, "He shall never feel this mortification." My imagination expanded. I believed myself your future patron, I conceived myself redeeming the injustice of nature, aiding and aggrandizing you, forcing you to confess that you owed more to me than to your parents, and throwing myself, with a disarmed and naked heart, on your gratitude alone for affection. I heard you call me brother,—I bid you stop, and call me benefactor. My nature, proud, generous, and fiery, had not yet quite emancipated itself from the influence of the Director, but every effort it made pointed, by an indescribable impulse, towards you. Perhaps the secret

of this is to be found in the elements of my character, which always struggled against dictation, and loved to teach itself all it wished to know, and inspire itself with the object of its own attachments. It is certain that I wished for your friendship, at the moment I was instructed to hate you. Your mild eyes and affectionate looks haunted me perpetually in the convent. To the professions of friendship repeatedly made me by the boarders, I answered, "I want a brother." My conduct was eccentric and violent,—no wonder, for my conscience had begun to operate against my habits. Sometimes I would apply with an eagerness that made them tremble for my health; at others, no punishment, however severe, could make me submit to the ordinary discipline of the house. The community grew weary of my obstinacy, violence, and irregularities. They wrote to the Director to have me removed, but before this could be accomplished I was seized with a fever. They

paid me unremitting attention, but there was something on my mind no cares of theirs could remove. When they brought me medicine with the most scrupulous punctuality, I said, "Let my brother fetch it, and if it be poison I will drink it from his hand; I have injured him much." When the bell tolled for matins and vespers, I said, "Are they going to make my brother a monk? The Director promised me differently, but you are all deceivers." At length they muffled the bell. I heard its stifled sound, and I exclaimed, "You are tolling for his funeral, but I,—I am his murderer!" The community became terrified at these exclamations so often repeated, and with the meaning of which they could not accuse themselves. I was removed in a state of delirium to my father's palace in Madrid. A figure like yours sat beside me in the carriage, alighted when we stopped, accompanied me where I remained, assisted me when I was placed again in the carriage.

So vivid was the impression, that I was accustomed to say to the attendants, " Stop, my brother is assisting me." When they asked me in the morning how I had rested? I answered, " Very well,—Alonzo has been all night at my bed-side." I invited this visionary companion to continue his attentions; and when the pillows were arranged to my satisfaction, I would say, " How kind my brother is, —how useful,—but *why will he not speak?*" At one stage I absolutely refused nourishment, because the phantom appeared to decline it. I said, " Do not urge me, my brother, you see, will not accept of it. Oh, I entreat his pardon, it is a day of abstinence,—that is his reason, you see how he points to his habit,—that is enough." It is very singular that the food at this house happened to be poisoned, and that two of my attendants died of partaking of it before they could reach Madrid. I mention these circumstances, merely to prove the rivetted hold you had

taken both of my imagination and my affections. On the recovery of my intellect, my first inquiry was for you. This had been foreseen, and my father and mother, shunning the discussion, and even trembling for the event, as they knew the violence of my temper, intrusted the whole business to the Director. He undertook it,—how he executed it is yet to be seen. On our first meeting he approached me with congratulations on my convalescence, with regrets for the constraints I must have suffered in the convent, with assurances that my parents would make my home a paradise. When he had gone on for some time, I said, "What have you done with my brother?" "He is in the bosom of God," said the Director, crossing himself. I understood him in a moment, —I rushed past him before he had finished. "Where are you going, my son?" "To my parents." "Your parents,—it is impossible that you can see them now." "But it is certain that I will see them.

Dictate to me no longer,—degrade yourself not by this prostituted humiliation," for he was putting himself in a posture of intreaty,—" I *will* see my parents. Procure for me an introduction to them this moment, or tremble for the continuance of your influence in the family." At these words he trembled. He did not indeed dread my influence, but he dreaded my passions. His own lessons were bitterly retaliated on him that moment. He had made me fierce and impetuous, because that suited his purpose, but he had neither calculated on, or prepared himself for, this extraordinary direction which my feelings had taken, so opposite to that which he had laboured to give them. He thought, in exciting my passions, he could ascertain their direction. Woe be to those, who, in teaching the elephant to direct his trunk against their foes, forget that by a sudden convolution of that trunk, he may rend the driver from his back, and trample him under his feet into the mire. Such

was the Director's situation and mine. I insisted on going instantly to my father's presence. He interposed, he supplicated; at last, as a hopeless resource, he reminded me of his continual indulgence, his flattery of my passions. My answer was brief, but Oh that it might sink into the souls of such tutors and such priests! "And that has made me what I am. Lead the way to my father's apartment, or I will spurn you before me to the door of it." At this threat, which he saw I was able to execute, (for you know my frame is athletic, and my stature twice that of his), he trembled; and I confess this indication of both physical and mental debility completed my contempt for him. He crawled before me to the apartment where my father and mother were seated, in a balcony that overlooked the garden. They had imagined all was settled, and were astonished to see me rush in, followed by the Director, with an aspect that left them no reason to hope for an auspicious result

of our conference. The Director gave them a sign which I did not observe, and which they had not time to profit by,—and as I stood before them livid from my fever, on fire with passion, and trembling with inarticulate expressions, they shuddered. Some looks of reproach were levelled by them at the Director, which he returned, as usual, by signs. I did not understand *them*, but I made them understand me in a moment. I said to my father, "Senhor, is it true you have made my brother a monk?" My father hesitated; at last he said, "I thought the Director had been commissioned to speak to you on that subject." "Father, what has a Director to do in the concerns of a parent and child? That man never can be a parent,—never can have a child, how then can he be a judge in a case like this?" "You forget yourself,—you forget the respect due to a minister of the church." "My father, I am but just raised from a death-bed, my mother and you trembled for my life,—

that life still depends on your words. I promised submission to this wretch, on a condition which he has violated, which—" "Command yourself, Sir," said my father, in a tone of authority which ill suited the trembling lips it issued from, "or quit the apartment." "Senhor," interposed the Director, in a softened tone, "let not me be the cause of dissension in a family whose happiness and honour have been always my object, next to the interests of the church. Let him go on, the remembrance of my crucified Master will sustain me under his insults," and he crossed himself. "Wretch!" I cried, grasping his habit, "you are a hypocrite, a deceiver!" and I know not of what violence I might have been guilty, but my father interposed. My mother shrieked with terror, and a scene of confusion followed, in which I recollect nothing but the hypocritical exclamations of the Director, appearing to struggle between my father and me, while he mediated with God for

both. He repeated incessantly, "Senhor, do not interpose, every indignity I suffer I make a sacrifice to Heaven; it will qualify me to be an intercessor for my traducer with God;" and, crossing himself, he called on the most sacred names, and exclaimed, "Let insults, calumnies, and blows, be added to that preponderance of merit which is already weighed in the scales of heaven against my offences," and he dared to mix the claims of the intercession of the saints, the purity of the immaculate Virgin, and even the blood and agony of Jesus Christ, with the vile submissions of his own hypocrisy. The room was by this time filled with attendants. My mother was conveyed away, still shrieking with terror. My father, who loved her, was driven by this spectacle, and by my outrageous conduct, to a pitch of fury,—he drew his sword. I burst into a laugh, that froze his blood as he approached me. I expanded my arms, and presented my breast, exclaiming, "Strike!

—this is the consummation of monastic power,—it begun by violating nature, and ends in filicide. Strike! give a glorious triumph to the influence of the church, and add to the merits of the holy Director. You have sacrificed your Esau, your first-born, already, let Jacob be your next victim." My father retreated from me, and, revolted by the disfigurement which the violence of my agitation had caused, almost to convulsion, he exclaimed, "Demon!" and stood at a distance viewing, and shuddering at me. "And who has made me so? *He* who fostered my evil passions for his own purposes; and, because one generous impulse breaks out on the side of nature, would represent or drive me mad, to effectuate his purposes. My father, I see the whole power and system of nature reversed, by the arts of a corrupt ecclesiastic. By his means my brother has been imprisoned for life;—by his means our birth has been made a curse to my mother and to you. What have

we had in the family since his influence was fatally established in it, but dissension and misery? Your sword was pointed against my heart this moment; was it nature or a monk that armed a parent against his child, whose crime was—interceding for his brother? Dismiss this man, whose presence eclipses our hearts, and let us confer together for a moment as father and son, and if I do not humiliate myself before you, spurn me for ever. My father, for God's sake examine the difference between this man and me, as we stand before you. We are together at the bar of your heart, judge between us. A dry and featureless image of selfish power, consecrated by the name of the church, occupies his whole soul,—I plead to you by the interests of nature, that must be sincere, because they are contrary to my own. He only wishes to wither your soul,—I seek to touch it. Is his heart in what he says? does he shed a tear? does he employ one impassioned expression? he calls

on God,—while I call only on you. The very violence which you justly condemn, is not only my vindication but my eulogy. They who prefer their cause to themselves, need no proof of their advocacy being sincere." "You aggravate your crime, by laying it on another; you have always been violent, obstinate, and rebellious." "But who has made me so? Ask himself, —ask this shameful scene, in which his duplicity has driven me to act such a part." "If you wish to show submission, give me the first proof of it, by promising never to torture me by renewing the mention of this subject. Your brother's fate is decided,—promise not to utter his name again, and——" "Never,—never," I exclaimed, "never will I violate my conscience by such a vow; and his who could propose it must be seared beyond the power of Heaven to touch it." Yet, in uttering these words, I knelt to my father, but he turned from me. I turned in despair to the Director. I said, "If

you are the minister of Heaven, prove the truth of your commission,—make peace in a distracted family, reconcile my father to both his children. You can effect this by a word, you know you can, yet you will not utter it. My unfortunate brother was not so inflexible to your appeals, and yet were they inspired by a feeling as justifiable as mine." I had offended the Director beyond all forgiveness. I knew this, and spoke indeed rather to expose than to persuade him. I did not expect an answer from him, and I was not disappointed,—he did not utter a word. I knelt in the middle of the floor between them. I cried, "Deserted by my father and by you, I yet appeal to Heaven. I call on it to witness my vow never to abandon my persecuted brother, whom I have been made a tool to betray. I know you have power,—I defy it. I know every art of circumvention, of imposture, of malignant industry,—every resource of earth and hell, will be set at work against me.

I take Heaven to witness against you, and demand only its aid to insure my victory." My father had lost all patience; he desired the attendants to raise and remove me by force. This mention of force, so repugnant to my habits of imperious indulgence, operated fatally on intellects scarcely recovering from delirium, and too strongly tried in the late struggle. I relapsed into partial insanity. I said wildly, "My father, you know not how mild, generous, and forgiving is the being you thus persecute,—I owe my life to him. *Ask your domestics if he did not attend me, step by step, during my journey?* If he did not administer my food, my medicines, and smoothe the pillows on which I was supported?" "You rave," cried my father, as he heard this wild speech, but he cast a look of fearful inquiry on the attendants. The trembling servants swore, one and all, as well they might, that not a human being but themselves had been suffered to approach me since I quitted the convent,

till my arrival at Madrid. The small remains of reason forsook me completely at this delaration, which was however true every word of it. I gave the lie to the last speaker with the utmost fury,—I struck those who were next me. My father, astonished at my violence, suddenly exclaimed, "He is mad." The Director, who had till then been silent, instantly caught the word, and repeated, "He is mad." The servants, half in terror, half in conviction, re-echoed the cry.

"I was seized, dragged away; and this violence, which always excited corresponding violence in me, realized all my father feared, and the Director wished for. I behaved just as a boy, scarce out of a fever, and still totally delirious, might be supposed to behave. In my apartment I tore down the hangings, and there was not a porcelain vase in the room that I did not dash at their heads. When they seized me, I bit their hands; when at length they were compelled to bind me, I gnaw-

ed the strings, and finally snapt them by a violent effort. In fact, I completely realized all the hopes of the Director. I was confined to my apartment for several days. During this time, I recovered the only powers that usually revive in a state of isolation,—those of inflexible resolution and profound dissimulation. I had soon exercise enough for both of them. On the twelfth day of my confinement, a servant appeared at the door of my apartment, and, bowing profoundly, announced, that if my health was recovered, my father wished to see me. I bowed in complete imitation of his mechanical movements, and followed him with the steps of a statue. I found my father, armed with the Director at his side. He advanced, and addressed me with an abruptness which proved that he forced himself to speak. He hurried over a few expressions of pleasure at my recovery, and then said, "Have you reflected on the subject of our last conversation?" "I have *reflected on*

it."—"*I had time to do so.*"—"And you have employed that time well?"—"I hope so."—"Then the result will be favourable to the hopes of your family, and the interests of the church." The last words chilled me a little, but I answered as I ought. In a few moments after the Director joined me, He spoke amicably, and turned the conversation on neutral topics. I answered him,—what an effort did it cost me!—yet I answered him in all the bitterness of extorted politeness. All went on well, however. The family appeared gratified by my renovation. My father, harassed out, was content to procure peace on any terms. My mother, still weaker, from the struggles between her conscience and the suggestions of the Director, wept, and said she was happy. A month has now elapsed in profound but treacherous peace on all sides. They think me subdued, but *

* * * *

"In fact, the efforts of the Director's

power in the family would alone be sufficient to precipitate my determinations. He has placed you in a convent, but that is not enough for the persevering proselytism of the church. The palace of the Duke de Monçada is, under his influence, turned into a convent itself. My mother is almost a nun, her whole life is exhausted in imploring forgiveness for a crime for which the Director, to secure his own influence, orders her a new penance every hour. My father rushes from libertinism to austerity,—he vacillates between this world and the next;—in the bitterness of exasperated feeling, sometimes reproaches my mother, and then joins her in the severest penance. Must there not be something very wrong in the religion which thus substitutes external severities for internal amendment? I feel I am of an inquiring spirit, and if I could obtain a book they call the Bible, (which, though they say it contains the words of Jesus Christ, they never permit us to see) I think

——but no matter. The very domestics have assumed the *in ordine ad spiritualia* character already. They converse in whispers—they cross themselves when the clock strikes—they dare to talk, even in my hearing, of the glory which will redound to God and the church, by the sacrifice my father may yet be induced to make of his family to its interests.

* * * *

"My fever has abated—I have not lost a moment in consulting your interests—I have heard that there is a possibility of your reclaiming your vows—that is, as I have been told, of declaring they were extorted under impressions of fraud and terror. Observe me, Alonzo, I would rather see you rot in a convent, than behold you stand forth as a living witness of our mother's shame. But I am instructed that this reclamation of your vows may be carried on in a civil court: If this be practicable, you may yet be free, and I shall be happy. Do not hesitate for resources, I

am able to supply them. If you do not fail in resolution, I have no doubt of our ultimate success.—*Ours* I term it, for I shall not know a moment's peace till you are emancipated. With the half of my yearly allowance I have bribed one of the domestics, who is brother to the porter of the convent, to convey these lines to you. Answer me by the same channel, it is secret and secure. You must, I understand, furnish a memorial, to be put into the hands of an advocate. It must be strongly worded,—but remember, not a word of our unfortunate mother;—I blush to say this to her son. Procure paper by some means. If you find any difficulty, I will furnish you; but, to avoid suspicion, and too frequent recurrences to the porter, try to do it yourself. Your conventual duties will furnish you with a pretext of writing out your confession,—I will undertake for its safe delivery. I commend you to the holy keeping of God,—not the God of monks and directors, but the God of na-

ture and mercy.——I am your affectionate brother,

JUAN DI MONÇADA."

" Such were the contents of the papers which I received in fragments, and from time to time, by the hands of the porter. I swallowed the first the moment I had read it, and the rest I found means to destroy unperceived as I received them,—my attendance on the infirmary entitling me to great indulgences."

At this part of the narrative, the Spaniard became so much agitated, though apparently more from emotion than fatigue, that Melmoth intreated him to suspend it for some days, and the exhausted narrator willingly complied.

END OF FIRST VOLUME.